CALLIRRHOË:

FAIR ROSAMUND.

BY

MICHAEL FIELD.

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CALLIRRHOË.

A DRAMA.

"To make the heart a spirit."—*Childe Harold*,
Canto iii., stanza 103.

MICHAEL FIELD.

PREFACE.

BEFORE the bar of Time this poem pleads guilty to anachronism. The establishment in Greece of the worship of Dionysus reaches back into the dateless vistas of legend. The Author has so far defied Cronus, that he has represented this foreign cult struggling for recognition in the midst of a refined and even sceptical Hellas. Mighty voices excuse him, which have prevailed in silencing the accusations of "old Time"; he is their client. Euripides puts the language of a sophist in the lips of pre-historic heroes. Virgil makes Æneas and Dido contemporaries.

The Author would here remark that his account of the rise of the drama is purely imaginative and unhistorical.

The story of Callirrhoë is drawn from a classic source, but has never been raised from obscurity by ancient bard or dramatist. This fact has permitted a latitude of treatment, unstraitened by the fear of presumption. Greek men and women are approached, not from the

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CALLIRRHOË.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Temple of Bacchus, Calydon. Anaitis and other Mænads asleep on the steps. Enter Coresus.*

Coresus. She sleeps: what wearied wildness in that arm
That crowns the head above the twisted vine's
Noon-faded leaves! Spent agitation gives
Strange calmness to her face. There is no calm
Like that upon the sea after the wind
Hath frenzied its blue breast,—as prophecy
The bosom of a Pythoness,—and passed.
She wakes and gathers up diffused dark limbs,
Springing from slumber as a wild beast springs
Forth from its lair.

Anaitis. Coresus!

Coresus. Snatch not up
The thyrsus with so tremulous a grasp!
To-night there is high revel in the hills,

Mystic assembly in the deep recess
Of cloven altitudes; meanwhile, for rest
The women lie in heaps about the court,
Their dappled fawn skins laid aside for heat,
Their ruined wreaths of scarlet briony
And fennel-staves lying athwart the limbs,
That gleam the clearer in the glow of sleep.
So shall they stay till eventide. What dream,
Anaitis, thus hath broken thy repose?

Anaitis. A dream I had—the altar!—Drops of gore!

Coresus. Ay, thou rememberest how the hinds were torn
In the last chase. Dione cried to see
The fleecy fringes of her nebris dyed
In blood, and fled. Then didst thou catch her hair,
And fling her, as a slender ivy-wand,
Amid the bloody fragments. Thought of this,—
Her horror, thy o'erhasty violence,—
Hath trampled with rough footstep on thy rest.

Anaitis. It was the altar: one for sacrifice
Was kneeling.

Coresus. Yea, Dione, suppliant
Beneath thy chastening hand.

Anaitis. Dione! No.
It was thy blood, Coresus, was the priest's!

Coresus. Would the god suffer it? Anaitis, wake,
Be sober; I have work for thee to do!
Go forth, and to the maids of Calydon
Break the rich tidings that I bore to thee.

Anaitis. Whom dost thou seek to gather to our band?

Coresus. I know two maidens. One is Nephele,
The daughter of Megillus, a fleet roe,
Tethered, as goat, to graze, pulling the cord,
Not pasturing. Go, loose, and bring her here.

Anaitis. An easy task. . . .

Coresus. Not therefore meet for thee.
There is a girl: beside the sycamore,
Once when a mighty storm was gathering,
She came alone for water to the brook.
Her water-pot was rested on a ledge
Of stone, and she, her large arms rounding it,
Was looking up. From the cerulean
The glittering fire outbroke. It played on her;
I caught her face tempestuous with delight.
But momently
I looked on her; the crowd was gathering,
The swarthy bull was waiting for the knife,
And, ere the heavier thunder shook the shrine,
Its neck was severed. O Anaitis, there
Is the true Mænad! The wide difference
'Twixt love and love, and oh! the wider room
'Twixt pieties! from the profaner sort
That wreathes its victim as it roasts its flesh,
With the same hands, same temper; then the stir,
The flutter of fresh life religion brings
To common youthful ardour! but the few,
Who learn it not from custom, suddenly

Behold it, as Narcissus his fair form;
Would peril all for its embrace, discern
In it the image of the unknown self,
And leap to it adoring. Even thus
Will that still girl feel the entrancing awe
Of the great mysteries. And dare I dream
To-night, beneath the silver firs, in sight
Of the full-breathing heavens, she shall clasp
The thyrsus, loose the honey-golden locks,
Give her fair bosom to the breeze, her soul . . . ?
Anaitis, win her!

Anaitis. Win her for yourself.

Coresus. Till now the highest favour I could grant
Was to make known my will. Five wandering years
As faithful comrade of my rest and march
Thou hast been with me, not incapable
Of lofty energies, needs, sympathies,
Beyond thy sex. Now I behold thee shrink,
Shrink to mere woman in thy jealousy.
No helpful comrade, a base sycophant,
Whom one must bribe.

Anaitis. 'Tis false. My thyrsus bears
A steely summit and my breast is soft;
Thus will I slay Coresus' sycophant!

Coresus. Mad fury! stay thine hand!

Anaitis. And dost thou care,
Care that Anaitis bleed not?

Coresus. Well, that day
The panther caught thee in his hungry paw,

I slew him; but I do not care to herd
With beasts as fierce as he, perfidious!
Anaitis [*crouching at his feet*]. My master, pardon!
thou didst rescue me.
Dost keep still the great scar.
Coresus. Look not so wild!
Thou shalt not seek to move Callirrhoë,
Who wouldst but fright her with thy maniac face,
The sweetly-ordered one! But if to-night
The bright-cheek'd Nephele join not the dance,
Thou shalt endure still harder words of me.
Anaitis And if I bring her?
Coresus. I will consecrate
To Dionysus. That is thy reward.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Callirrhoë's Home. She is spinning.*

Callirrhoë (*sings*).

Ay, twirl the spindle, twirl it round,
The spindle with the dark wool wound!
But, maiden, if too well you spin,
Or twist the threaded purple thin
With deftest finger, think, oh! think
Of her whose web of snowy link,
Deject Arachne, hangs above.
See that the gods thy spinning love.

[*Enter Nephele.*]

What mean these crimson vine-leaves round thy feet,

My Nephele? Why is thy hair unbound,
Thy polished cheek rent with the bramble scar,
And thy bright lips discoloured? What! In tears?
Nephele. Callirrhoë, oh! hide me in thy gown;
It is so perilous a grief, a shame
So wild and strange that I must tell thee of;
I tremble to remember it, and more
To tell it open-faced. To the red bower
Of oleander, by the forest-stream,
Where thou and I in girlish solitude
So oft have hidden for sweet conference,
I went, and looking up, saw—not thy clear
Calm brows, Callirrhoë—a face as bright
As burnished shield, with hair that looked alive,
And cloak of shining hide. I lay as still
As if a leopard couched there; but she came,
The wondrous creature, threw her spells on me,
And emptied my young heart as easily
As from a pomegranate one plucks the seeds.
And then she drew me, in caressing arms,
By secret pathways, to the temple-gates,
Where stood Coresus.
Callirrhoë. The new Bacchic priest?
My father likes him not, thinks that the gods,
In scorn of mortal insolence, connive
At this chaotic fury in men's wits.
Nephele. Callirrhoë, had you been there I think
You would have saved me. It seemed different
When great Coresus turned and looked on me.

He is himself a god. He beckoned me,
As the mild bull Agenor's child. We drank;
I let him loose and wreathe my hair alone.
He asked me—had I strength to dedicate
Myself to the delivering god. I felt
The Mænads gather round me. I was doomed,
And as a bride, half-swooning in the flare
Of Hymen's torches is borne blindly off,
I was caught up by the great choric throng,
And in a daze of wonder found myself
Whirling the thyrsus. . . . It may be I swooned.
When I awoke it was quite still. I thought
To creep home quietly, but my strange dress,
And a deep shame and wonder at myself,
Made me seek shelter with thee.

Callirrhoë. Yes, thou shalt
Rest thee in mine own bed, and afterwards
I will anoint thy cheeks and braid thy hair,
Thou foolish child; and when less piteous
Thine aspect, I will give thee thy full due
Of blame. Now to my room. [*Exeunt.*

[*Re-enter Callirrhoë.*]

(*Sings.*) Ah, Eros does not always smite
With cruel shining dart,
Whose bitter point with sudden might
Rends the unhappy heart,—
Not thus for ever purple-stained,
And sore with steely touch,

Else were its living fountain drained
Too oft, and overmuch.
O'er it sometimes the boy will deign
Sweep the shaft's feathered end :—
And friendship rises, without pain,
Where the white plumes descend.
Well, I must scold her for her wilfulness,
And take her back, in penitence and tears,
To her old tasks. My spindle strikes the ground.
How strong of brain and heart perforce must be
The Fates who spin our lives, from the confused
And tangled mass of Destiny withdrawing
Fibres that form the web of our existence.
Oh! work terrific, solemn! Yet I'd be
A kind fate to my brother and my sire.
This thread should be the love of Nephele.
For when Emathion tells her father's praise,
"Not Omphale more cunning at the loom."
And when I question archly—"Thou the god
Caught in her toils?" he turns from me and laughs.
And for my father. . . . But necessity
Dominates fate! Then is it well, indeed,
I cannot spin their lives for those I love;
Else had I died sooner than twist the black,
Thick thread of blindness through my father's days.
I wish Emathion would come! 'Tis late.
"See that the gods thy spinning love."
[*Noise without.*] 'Tis he, my glorious brother, radiant
From the palæstra.

[*Enter Emathion.*]

Emathion. At the spindle still,
My nimble-fingered, grave Callirrhoë?
Like feast day, I put by the work. The gods
Love not late spinning.

Callirrhoë. I have nearly done.
Be patient, for I'm spinning you your life.
Twisting such threads of deep-dyed happiness,
As might inspire with proud impiety,
And ruin you.

Emathion. What doom hangs in this thread?
Say, does the fibre run along with gold?

Callirrhoë. A thing more precious.

Emathion. Health, strong-sighted age,
Still beautiful?

Callirrhoë. Nay, will you urge me still?

Emathion. I'll threaten you ere long.

Callirrhoë. Well, 'tis the love
Of Nephele. Good brother, you were warned,
And now!—But where's our father, for at noon
Your careful hand was guardian to his steps
That would to town? You have not left him lone,
Sightless among the crowd of seeing men?

Emathion. I left him chatting with a hoary friend
Of tedious, ancient days, of unknown wars,
And men, whose names were but a link of sounds
Unto my recent ears. 'Tis wonderful
How old men when together will re-thrash
The out-thrashed past!

Callirrhoë. I know that age's tardy converse, dull
With iterated stale experience,
Chafes youth's hot-blooded moods as station'd rock
The running stream. 'Tis easier far for me,
Who lead so still a life, to keep from fret;
The lake is always quiet round the stone.
Emathion, forgive; but the old man
Complains he rarely sees you with his hand,
Who wast his eyes' great object. Oftener
Be near to him. . . .

Emathion. Poor father, I will sit
My hand in his when next he fills the hearth.

Callirrhoë. My kind Emathion! I dare not pass
The door, now darkness mixes with the light,
Like dark wine spreading through clear water, yet
I'm ill at ease. Our father should be here.
'Tis growing dark, oh, not for him! But still
'Tis late. Emathion, step out and look.

Emathion. Callirrhoë,
He told me I might leave him.

Callirrhoë. Yes, I know.

[*Exit Emathion.*

So beautiful,
So gentle and so kind! I'm glad I told
About my father's plaint. Poor old blind eyes,
That cannot see him in his loveliness,
Most pity-worthy is your lack of sight!
I'm tired of spinning! In the viny sweeps
Of sunshine on the hills, if a god lurk,

Deliverer of women from their toil
In household darkness to the broad sweet light,
Do they so ill to flee to him for joy?
"Can it be meant," I often ask myself,
"Callirrhoë, that thou shouldst simply spin,
Be borne of torches to the bridal-bed,
Still a babe's hunger, and then simply die,
Or wither at the distaff, who hast felt
A longing for the hills and ecstasy?"
The fair twinned sister of the Delian
Must empty the rich passions of her heart
Where purple arbute-boughs encompass her,
In safest silence, or the bosky oak
Lets not a sigh escape. She must be mute,
The fair twinned sister of the Delian.
For him, the sunshine and the song; for her,
The virgin lip and the inviolate shade.
Hear me, thou holy Huntress, and protect
My thoughts from lawless wandering beyond bound
Of thy own sacred precincts. Steps! of two!
Dear father!

[*Enter Machaon and Emathion.*]

Machaon. He is safe at Cleitophon's.
I came lest you should fear, and on my way
I met my friend.

Callirrhoë. My kind Machaon, thanks!
I own that anxious fear had just looked in
At door o' my heart. But enter.

Emathion. Yes, I'd have

These Mænads cleared away. I hate their cries.

Machaon. As peacock-shrieks at night.

Emathion. I hate their wild
Contorted forms.

Machaon. Like pines on Cithæron.
Your sister goes for water to the stream
That makes your doorway pleasant at all hours.
A rare and lusty maiden! Why, the jar
Sits on her head with firmer majesty
Than Rhea's towery crown. Lo, she returns,
With red and watery fingers, and a pot
Filled justly to the brim. Callirrhoë,
Give me a draught!

Callirrhoë. The little twy-eared bowl—
Emathion, fetch it.

Emathion. I don't know its place.

Callirrhoë. I'll go. [*Exit.*

Machaon. 'Tis pity you're too old to learn
(*To Callirrhoë, who re-enters*).
A cup-bearer to whom the gods should rise.
And now I've risen, I must straightway home.
My mother had my supper on the board—
A quail! I have not told you that I met
Megillus—in his head a thunder-storm,
Of which the lightning flashed from out his eyes.
It seems his daughter 's made off to the hills.

Emathion. Never!

Machaon. Why, cheeks are Tyrian in a trice,
Emathion? Well, well! good-bye, fair friend. [*Exit.*

Callirrhoë. Brother, 'tis true. She lies upon my bed.
She was deceived, is sorry. Take her home.
If you would take her home, she might be spared
From punishment and tears—two gloomy blights
You should protect your rose from.
Emathion. She has thorns.
I will not meet her parents.
Callirrhoë. Fetch her nurse.
Emathion. She ill deserves protection, yet in this
I'll be her slave to-night. Callirrhoë,
I threw the discus far beyond the rest.
Callirrhoë. I'm very glad.
Emathion. You only love too much
Your idle brother. I must have a kiss !
You were too dread for touch of mortal lip
While you were spinning Fate. [*Exit.*
Callirrhoë. The twilight falls
In showers of darkness. She will tell me all
The mystery of the effulgent night,
Up in the bluer dark among the stars,
Will Nephele. They say the new god shares
Pan's maziest secrets in deep fellowship ;
That the birds speak and even the brooks reveal
The thoughts of their clear currents. Every day
I fill my pitcher by the bubbling stream,
Close to the sycamore. It seems a girl
Full of sweet impulse. I would gather her
To my still bosom, and receive her love ;
But we are sundered. What if this new god

Of the warm vineyards and the budding trees
Could draw her trembling spirit to the brink?
It cannot be;
Else had our fathers known and worshipped him.
I reverence my father's old grey head;
I reverence antiquity, the hoar
Aspect of Time. What folly to revere
The headstrong, blustering present, Time's untrained,
Immodest youth! The elder age alone,
With Nestor-like authority, can hush
To-day's rough disputants. I hear its voice
Proclaiming the eternal pieties
These Mænads have be-mocked. I'll wake the child,
Ere my thoughts grow too angry; strip from her
The ivy meshes, cleanse her lips from stain,
And dress her in white vesture meet for maid. [*Exit*

SCENE III.—*Beneath a sycamore tree. Callirrhoë resting. Enter Coresus at a distance.*

Coresus. How beautiful
The face, how fixed in its forlorness, wan
As Ariadne, when she kept the coast
Of Naxos, ever straining for a sail.
Ay, but Eleleus sought her with acclaim,
Crowned her, and set her bride-wreath in the stars.
Oh, how I love her! how I burn for her!
And yet I fear her obstinate as him
From whom as from the grape its purple coat

Iacchus tore the skin. Heaven ravish her!
Coresus is too weak.
Callirrnoë,
I seek for a strayed maiden, Nephele
Her name, a bearer of the Bacchic reed,
Lost on the hills last night. I oft have seen
Ye two together on the temple-steps
Or washing at the brook. Where is she fled?
Callirrhoë. She's safe within her father's house, ashamed
Of her wild yester-revel and revolt
From seemliness and maiden modesty.
Seek not again to capture her!
Coresus. I seek
To ransom, not enslave, Callirrhoë,
Calling all men to the Deliverer.
Look in mine eyes, and say if servitude
Be not your daily portion. Can you set
Your limbs free to the rhythm of your soul?
Is there a passion in you that dare speak?
Are not your bosom's offspring, young desires,
Served to you mutilate, a sick'ning food
By the world's impious custom? Spurn the feast
As the Divinity the Libyan dish!
Callirrhoë. These are wild words, bewildering to the brain.
Coresus. As heaven's inrush. Be brave, Callirrhoë;
Ask yourself have you not a deeper need
Than the stale rites of customary gods
Can satisfy? and speak in earnestness.

Tell me about yourself!

Callirrhoë. I oft have longed
For speech with the dark sea and glittering hills,
For stories of the world, for wider care
And love of creatures other than myself.
Can your god give me these?

Coresus. He came to bring
Life, more abundant life, into a world
That doled its joys as a starved city doles
Its miserable scraps of mummying bread.
He came to gladden and exalt, all such
Must suffer. Call men to the battle, swords
Clash the response; bid them arouse themselves
From foolish habit, customary sloth,
In bestial ignorance of your intent,
They trample, tear you. Dionysus thus
Suffered; he still endures at Calydon
Men's insolence in his rejected priest—
Though founder of fair laws, of citied life,
And guide to the untrodden paths of peace.

Callirrhoë. The potent rioter! Of old the gods
Gave culture by the harp, the helm, the plough,
Not by the ivy-wand.

Coresus. Seems it so strange
That Semele's sublime audacity
Should be the origin of life urbane?
We must be fools; all art is ecstasy,
All literature expression of intense
Enthusiasm: be beside yourself.

If a god violate your shrinking soul,
Suffer sublimely.
Callirrhoë. Yet I hold it true,
Divinity oft comes with quiet foot.
Coresus. To give a moment's counsel or to guard
From instant peril. When a god forsakes
Olympus to infuse divinity
In man's mean soul, he must confound, incite,
O'erwhelm, intoxicate, break up fresh paths
To unremembered sympathies. Nay, more,
Accompany me further in my thought,—
Callirrhoë, I tell you there are hours
When the Hereafter comes and touches me
O' the cheek. I see the triumph of the King,
The gleaming crag of the Acropolis,
The mustered city spectatorial
Of vast emotion on the hollowed hill.
In the midst the Bromian altars. Oh, he sways
That peopled amplitude, that press of life,
With so intense a tyranny he holds
The reins of its very breath. Men may not stand
Beholding, when the conflict's at the heart;
The event's cold ere it reaches them. There, there
They watch as mothers watch their wrestling sons,
Fell Mora with humanity in clutch,
The dying hero with the victor lip,
The lordless creature, dominant and lone.
Callirrhoë. I tremble at your god, for terrible
In wrath I fear him; though you speak him fair.

I surely know
That he provokes men to unnatural deeds,
And once stirred frenzied mother as a fell
Tigress to murder her deluded son.

Coresus. More shalt thou hear; more horrible detail
Of the avenger. Of a churlish king
Sudden he seized the recreant body, lashed
Its members severally limb by limb
To horses fleeter than strong Phœbus reins;
Nor shuddered when the dull Edonian
Left a mere sputtering trail behind the hoofs.

Callirrhoë. Peace, peace, Coresus; he will bring us woes,
Woes on my father, on Emathion,
On Calydon, my city, if he bears
A breast so ruthless. I will hear no more.

Coresus. Turn not away, Callirrhoë; by goads
The ox-souled must be driven; yield response
To Heaven's desire of thee; love humanly.
Love is the frenzy that unfolds ourselves;
Before it seize us we are ignorant
Of our own power as reed-bed of the pipe.
The rushes sang not; from Pan's burning lips
Syrinx sucked music. Wert thou lute to love
There were a new song of the heaven and earth.
I have been foolish frighting thee with things
Too wonderful for a soul-snooded girl
To bear the thought of; think of them no more;
Think but of me, no veiled divinity,

Coresus, a mere man, a suppliant
Clasping your knees in his extremity;
Craving the alms of your great love, and yet
Withal so ravenous at heart, he scarce
Can bide the time of his petitioning.

Callirrhoë. I have not loved—

Coresus. Till now. You cannot say
You love not.

Callirrhoë. That I will not yield my love
To Bacchic priest, I can. From earliest days
I have been trained in the old pieties;
And oft 'mid common household work have smiled
To think how like the blessèd gods my hands
From chaos could educe a tiny world
Of perfect order. My dear father's peace
I will not wreck, as Nephele; he ne'er
Shall miss his daughter at the evening board,
Nor sadder, find her truant to herself,
Indocile, indolent. It cannot be
That any but a mocking messenger
Can come in Heaven's name to set the child
Against the parent.

Coresus. As unseasoned wood
That smokes and will not kindle is flung by
For any refuse purpose, while the train
Of torchlight sinuous winds among the hills,
A starry serpent, so art thou cast out,
An apathetic slave of commonplace,
Sluggish and irreceptive of true life,

From all high company of heavenly things.
Go to your home.

Callirrhoë. Oh Heaven shelter it!

Coresus. Go home, Callirrhoë; ask if all be well
Within the city: do not fear men's looks,
Or any whispering about the streets.
The temple-rites reclaim me; from your loom
You have been too long absent. Go in peace.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE IV.—*A Bower in a Garden. Enter Emathion.*

Emathion. How beautiful is life and youth and love;
How fair are girls and boys—how more than fair
My Nephele!
Her brow is of as clear and warm a whiteness
As a young egg that lies in the dove's nest!
She comes! I'll hide! [*Hides.*

[*Enter Nephele.*]

Nephele. He is not here. Naughty Emathion.

Emathion [*apart*]. But only just outside.

Nephele. It is unkind! He vow'd to keep his time.

Emathion [*aloud*]. And only kept his vow.

Nephele. You naughty boy!

Emathion. If you will call him good, he'll break his vow,
And run away directly.

Nephele. Naughty boy!

Emathion. If you will call him good, he'll keep his vow,

And come and sit by you.

Nephele. He's a good boy.

Emathion. Look at those roses, they are near each other,
And what do they keep doing?

Nephele. Nothing much.

Emathion. Why, lightly touching.

Nephele. There's a wind that makes them.

Emathion. Love be our wind! [*Kisses her.*

Nephele. There's some one stepping past.
'Tis Hylia and her father.

Hylia. He hath asked,
Hath asked my love.

Acephalus. He is an amorous youth!
Go wed—but don't forget old father, girl.

Hylia. Oh no, nor mother. I will come across
And kiss you every morning.

Acephalus. Do not cry.
Astynous, if he saw, would think I said
You should not marry him, and yet he'd see
It was not rain of grief, but the first dew
O' the dawn of joy. [*They pass on.*

Nephele. I wish my father loved me.
He beats me; you won't?

Emathion. Beat you! Horrible!
I cannot beat a dog. Don't talk of it.
Look at that cyclamen!—
The little flowery satyr, all white ears.
It must not hear of anything but love.

I love you—let it hear that you love me.
Nephele. I love you.
Emathion. Nephele,
Thus should life be one chord of youth, love, joy!

SCENE V.—*Temple of Dionysus. Before the Altar. Enter Coresus and Anaitis.*

Coresus. Gall thrown in sweetest wine will make the cup
As bitter as 'twas sweet. Throw poison in,
And it is venomous as cockatrice.
The goblet of my love holds now a draught
'Twere death to wet the lips with. She has scorned
My god, my passion, as she might refuse
A gift of oleander some light boy
Would lay in her pale bosom. So she spurned
The human gift of my man's utter love,
So great, it grew Titanic in its bulk,
With swelling sinews of immense desire,
And laid its own magnificent excess
At her feet for her to wonder at and scorn.
Woe, woe to her!
About the columns booms a shout of woe,
Responsive to my menace. 'Tis the god
Sealing my malediction. Now instead
Of that grand prostrate love, hate's feller form
Encounters her—a Herculean power
Equipped for vengeance. I will make her quail,

Anaitis! Those proud lips that scorned my love
Shall blanch and quiver. Dost thou think of it,
My love, Anaitis?

Anaitis. Ay, an icy girl,
With veins that knew not summer.

Coresus. With a heart
Colder than coldest marble in a vault.

Anaitis. Thou hatest her?

Coresus. As light-bereaving death.

Anaitis. Then let me spread my hair upon her!

Coresus. Nay.
To tear the lovely branches of her limbs
From their white trunk were suffering too small,
Too easy.

Anaitis. Let me tear her. 'Tis enough.
I'm hungry for her.

Coresus. Woman-tiger, nay!
Thou shalt not tear her.

Anaitis. Let me curse her then—
Call madness, bid it plunge its scarlet brand
Within her brain to burn as stubble.

Coresus. Nay.
On her no curse; but on her city set
Long-famished plague. That curse as flicker cast
Athwart the mourner's face from glaring pyre
That feeds on what is precious, will evoke
Worse agonies than the sharp pangs of death.

Anaitis. My arms are lifted upward. Lift up thine.

Coresus. I lift them to a god who can chastise.

Anaitis. Speak, call, nay shout to Heaven !
Coresus. Bacchus, hear
Thine injured priest, thou great Revenger, hear !
Throughout the city let quick murrain breed ;
Drive Sleep away from his grim brother Death,
And then let Death pass single through the gates.
Let hardy limbs grow slack, crook up and fall—
Then burn and stiffen. Populate the streets
With Hades' ghosts, long, fleshless, pallid men.
Let the foul body know no laving hand ;
And let no flowers touch the hideous face ;
The mouth receive no coin ; no bed be dressed ;
No jar of water stand before the door.
Let the whole city be one house of death,
The gates its theshold, and humanity
Its single corpse. Be Vesta's flame extinct,
While ravening funereal fires leap high
Fierce from consuming corpses. Let strange fear
Flap wings unseen that beat upon the heart
Bestilling it with terror. Thus revenge !
Anaitis. Hear !
Coresus. Hear ! [*Thunder and lightning.*
Anaitis. The lightning flares, the thunder rolls !
Coresus. Our prayer is heard !
Anaitis. And granted by the god.
Coresus. Dreadful the "yes" of the omnipotent.
Anaitis. Silence, not thunder, were a dreadful thing.
Coresus. The tomb is wide as mouth of tragic mask.
Anaitis. Wide for the god's and for thine enemies.

Coresus. Io triumphe! Io! for the sign!
Anaitis. The silence is as dreadful as when corpse
With all the wailing women hath been borne
Away, and the house echoes to no step
Or voice.
Coresus. And in this silence it may be
That Destiny receives within her womb
Plague; and ere night descend—
The rapid birth may be accomplish'd—Doom
Rent by Fulfilment, and, 'mid human shrieks,
The slaughterous child of wrath be recognised.
During the throes of the great birth, my brain
Is restless. I must rove, I cannot rest.
Anaitis. Woe to the arms that first receive the child.
Coresus. Woe to the city of whose life 'tis heir!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE VI.—*A Wood. Enter Dione.*

Dione. Oh, the deep woods!
I feel they hide within their inmost hearts
Some strange and thrilling secret, mighty, dark,
Unshared by mountain, sea, or Heaven's self.
My childhood felt its burthen when the shade
Of the green darkness grew about the path
I followed for dropt nut or lonely bloom.
Oh, to be friend to the great forest, earn
Its trust, and penetrate its green reserve!
Within the bosky dells,

And breathless gloom of the dense leaves, I've grown
Familiar with the gentle happy fauns,
And mystic dryads with dun crowns of oak.
Yet these too share the mystery of their woods,
They feel it, round their simple lips it lurks,
But cannot take expression.—Angry steps
Crack the curled arbute-leaves upon the ground.
The feet are brown! I'm very lonely here!
Coresus! but I tremble at his brow.
Coresus. Ye gods!
A hurricane is raging in my heart,
And shaking the foundations of my life
Almost to ruin. Round me all is still,
So still, I could throw up my arms and beat
The bushes till they whirled, only to make
What is without me more like that within.
To think the vaulted world holds not a breeze,
And all its winds are packed into this heart!
Come, storm; come, crackling gale and tempest, come!
I'd bear the wild contention of my breast.
But outer calm, dark green serenity,
Coo of a ring-dove; it is maddening,
Provocative of torment and impatience
That makes the torment worse!
Dione [*aside*]. It is a song!
Who sings thus timely? 'Tis a little faun
Coresus loves, with buoyant happiness
Almost in flight. I'll slip away and watch.
[*Hides at a distance.*

Faun (*singing*).

Down the forest-path I fled,
And follow'd a buzzing bee,
Till he clomb a foxglove red.
He filled full the nodding cup;
I stood and I laughed to see;
Then closed it and shut him up,
Till I laughed and set him free.

O master, master, I have had great game,
And I have laughed and laughed until I cried,
And laughed again, to have him safely there,
The bee within a blossom; for I tried
To catch him, and he flew so fast before,
I could not, till he dropt his wings and crept
Up the tubed foxglove. Master, you are glad?

Coresus. My silly faun, glad that thou hadst thy wish;
Would that a flower encompassed mine, and not
A stricken city!
A blossom holds a bee, a city plague.
My childish faun immures the murmuring bee,
I the malignant plague. How far apart,
How sundered by such difference of choice,
Are he and I!

Faun. I'm tired.

Coresus. And yesterday
We gathered chestnuts and our laughter mixed!

Faun. Listen, you do not listen; I am tired.

Coresus. I hear! Ha, boy, thine eyes agaze! Laugh, boy!

Thou wilt not laugh? Thy face was cut for smiles.
Faun. I love you.
Coresus. Pretty faun, methinks thou dost.
Faun. I had a little heap o' hazel nuts
I counted underneath the silver fir.
A squirrel came, his tail along his back,
And looked at me until I gave him half.
Coresus. 'Twas a bold squirrel!—O my god, my god!
Scatter my wild prayer, even as the wind
Disperses foam the wrathful sea uplifts.
Scatter it thus! Oh, I was deeply moved!
Had I no cause?—no cause? That could not be.
I suffered scorn, insufferable wrong,
Shame ineffaceable! I marked her mouth,
I saw it push out as a bud of rose;
It parted into blossom, and for scent
I got a taunt, still in my nostrils rank.
I'll give her fragrance, smell of rotting friends;
She shall draw in the odours of sweet death.
She shall—— But tell me of the pigeon's nest.
Faun. Why, yester-morn an egg lay on the twigs,
On the hard twigs.
I pitied it, and laid it on the moss
At foot o' the tree. This morning it was cold;
And so I pitied it again, and put
It back. To-morrow I shall find it warm.
Shall I not, master?
Coresus. Yes.—She would not love
A Bacchic priest, she said. Because I serve

Religion am I then unfit for Love ?
What ! does religion blurr the face or dwarf
The stature, lame the feet, or make one shoulder
O'ertop the other ?
Because I strike with sacrificial knife,
A woman stabs my honour with her tongue.
Because I pour libations to the god,
A woman empties all her scorn on me.
A priest's love, like a sinewless old hound,
Is kicked aside ! My office is a brand
That stamps me despicable in the eyes
Of the one being I have ever loved
To my love's height and stretch of my heart's arms.—
And is the ant-hill busy ?

Faun. Yes, indeed.
The ants are busy day and night, and yet
I think they're sometimes idle, for they run
About my hand and to and fro ; I call
That play, and laugh at them.

Coresus. She scorned the priest,
Then did she scorn the god. My wrath is holy,
Sacred and priestly. Ay, Callirrhoë,
Priestly, I say.

Faun. You're dull as the old owl,
Who, when I dance, looks straight before his beak,
And, when I laugh, turns round his eye on me !
I do not like the owl.

Coresus. Be still, be still.
It's growing dark. My heart's a cataract

Of whirling blood; my veins are furious channels
Of crimson passion. I am drunk with wrath,
I stagger, and the trees appear to writhe.
What, have they got the plague? And all the people
Will writhe their arms like that?

Faun. I wonder if the woodpecker would cease
His knocking to the dryad in the tree
If I ran up?

Coresus. I wonder if the first
Blue corpse is carried out in Calydon.

Faun. I'll try his true love for the hidden girl.

Coresus. And I will see if any yet be dead.

[*Exit wildly.*

Dione [*advancing*].

Weep not. He's sad, and doth not love thee less.
I'll with thee to the ant-hill. Show the way,
And dance along.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Bridal Chamber. Astynous and Hylia.*

Astynous. O Hylia, my dark and shapely maid,
New bound to me as wife—a bliss too great
For me to grasp, discovered gold in mass
My eager arms are hopeless to contain—
O Hylia, thy silence slits my heart
With cruel edge. A vague, dark horror rolls
Thine eyes, like hunted doe's, and thy touch leaves
Hot impress on my sense. My Hylia,
Is married love thus fearful, feverous, still ?
Then curse I Hymen, and would have my wife
Maiden once more, that I might woo again.
Hylia. Astynous, dear husband !
Astynous. Ah, that's well.
Speak thus deliciously again. Thy words,
Though few, are each a red-ripe, perfect fruit
Of speech. A smile ! but a mere ghost of such
As live where now I kiss ! Is it so strange,
So fearful to be mine forever ?
Hylia. Nay,
Astynous ; in sooth I'm very gay
And joyous.

Astynous. With sad face ; an oracle
That hides its import.
Hylia. O—h ! I'm falling !
Astynous. Nay,
Requesting an embrace ! Ye gods ! her head
Hangs loose with backward chin ! My Hylia,
Speak to Astynous ! O my bride, my bride !
I cannot hold her longer, she must drop,
So weighty grows her delicate, slight form.
Mother, O mother ! Nay, she cannot hear.
I'll bear my dreadful burden to her room.
O bridal-bed, that will not hold the bride
To-night ! I shall go mad ! It yet may be
She faints and will revive to fill these arms
Less heavily than now ! Ha ! I have crushed
The myrtle wreath that's tumbled from her hair !
I dread the omen ! Nay, she'll soon be well.
[*Exit, carrying her.*

SCENE II.—*Callirrhoë's Home. Cephalus before the door.*

[*Enter Callirrhoë.*]

Callirrhoë. What, lonely, my dear father ? When I left
Emathion was with you.
Cephalus. Hastily
He broke from me, my child ; that busy youth
Evamon, passing by, took hold of him,
Swearing he must not miss the eloquence

Of Periander, the new sage, who draws,
Machaon says, our city's idle youth.
The beamy breeze hath grown a little chill,
Or loneliness hath something damp'd my heart;
Almost I seem in Hades, from the sun
Cut off as those sore-sighing ones below.
Soothe me, Callirrhoë; thou know'st a strain
Of Eos' love. Sing me that song of light!

Callirrhoë. If he could see me! Can I trust my voice?
That cloud that swift as lizard to its hole
Made for the city; it pursued me fast—
Is with me here, and on my father's head
In gathering volume tarries.

(*Sings.*) To the gods doth Eos bright
Bear the tidings of the light;
Catching, as the morning steals,
At swift Helius' chariot-wheels.
But to-day she doth not care
What the clouds for livery wear;
Dark and dewful are her eyes
When the morning sun doth rise;
And she sheds still heavier tears
As his glory disappears.
Smitten by Scamander's bed,
Her bright warrior-boy lies dead.
She hath washed him in the wave,
Deck'd him in a garment brave;
But his eyelids, sunk more deep,

Settle into marble sleep.
She must to the father go
With her life-bedark'ning woe.

Cephalus. Dear child, there is a trouble in thy voice.
Say, art thou weary climbing the long hill?

Callirrhoë. Nay, father; for the song is sorrowful.—
Oh, could he see! now it is like a web,
A mesh of tempest, tangling all the streets
In blinding toils!—But listen, I will try
The happy end, and we shall both be cheer'd.
(*Sings.*) Clasping the great knees in prayer,
She beseeches, "Oh, if e'er,
When the shrouding night-clouds flee,
Rosy from the reddened sea
Sprang thine Eos, grant me this—
Leave not my pale boy in Dis."
Then the father faltered—smiled;
Eos' blushes saved her child.

Cephalus. Oh, the young light! how goldenly it stole
In May-time 'mid the glade of budding oaks,
When thou did'st gather flowers for Artemis—
Thou mindest?—that spring-day six years ago.

Callirrhoë. Yes. O my father, let me lead thee back;
I fear some great calamity—a cloud
Hangs over Calydon.

Cephalus. Then will we in,
I felt the air unwholesome.

Callirrhoë. Father, stay!
The heavens press on us, and I dare not move.

Cephalus. These sudden showers make the young vineyards swell.
Kindly it thunders, we shall have soft rain.
Callirrhoë. Nay, there is deadly hurricane, a stir
After the stillness, like the whirring wings
Of swooping eagle. Let me hide thee ! So !
Cling close to me.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

Demophile. Haste ! Little Nephele
Is struck with sudden sickness. Come to her.
Cephalus. Quickly, my daughter.
Callirrhoë. Can I leave him now ?
My father, trust me, for I know the sign ;
We lie 'neath Heaven's curse.
I have been summoned by the Bacchic priest
To worship and to love ; rejecting him,
He burst upon me with strange threats.
Demophile. More woe.
Callirrhoë, haste ! Sweet Hylia is dead. [*Exit.*
Callirrhoë. Father, I
Thy child am wholly subject to thy will.
Our Calydon is smitten for my pride ;
This brood of dreadful cloud—this black descent
Of feverous wind. Let me to Bacchus' shrine !
I will deny no more Coresus' love,
I will entreat him supplicate the god
For my dear city, for Emathion, thee,
My father. Oh, command me speedily !
Cephalus. Nay, child, we suffer for the foolishness

That has bewitched this city; drunken heaps
Of maddened women have infected it.
The babe hath perished, while the mother's breast
Has suckled the young panther on the hills.
Men, of their wives forsaken, have grown wild,
Disordered, hungry, and uncivilized.
Apollo sees his sister's shrine desert,
Her virgin followers flocking to the hills
For all unseemly revel. He descends,
Branding the irreligion with the scathe
Of Heaven. Fear not, my child, for me; I fear
My father's gods, and to their care commend
My daughter. Hark! Another urging foot
Is here!

[*Re-enter Demophile.*]

Demophile. Haste, ere the little one be dead.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Market Place. Cleitophon, Megillus Acephalus, Machaon, Emathion, citizens.*

Machaon. Idle i' the market-place! 'Tis no time for talk. We must all work. Our wealth in dead cannot be counted, so fast and faster does Plague's impress give them currency.

1*st Cit.* Ay, but the elders meet. Peace. Peace! He continues—

Cleitophon. For all along the way my course was choked
With issue—thick as concourse, when the crowd

Gathers for some high festal sacrifice—
Of black'ning corpses. Men cried out to me:
"You who have wisdom, dwelling near the gods,
Learn if neglected hecatomb or rite,
In ignorance polluted, is revenged
By this strange glare of sanguine ulcerous death,
That sudden paints our bodies, burns, and spreads,
And, heating as it travels onward, lights
A raging furnace, till the chilly gust
Of death creep after and put out the flame.
Help us, and we——

2nd Cit. No oration—no periods!

Acephalus. Already the corpses drop like birds on the snows of Scythia.

3rd Cit. And death feeds the flames as an eagle her eaglets.

Cleitophon. Woe to us! 'Tis the forsaken shrine of Artemis, the withered flowers stretched on the dusty marble, that hath wrought this evil.

Acephalus. Fire-brands! Flint, wood, flame! To the temple of the Barbarian! Burn, kill, ravage!

Megillus. Now it may just be that the fault is not in the place of your condemnation, that you're beating the grass while the snake's yonder. I would say that the new god may be a god; and then where are we,—aye, and the fruit too! I'm for the Bromian!

4th Cit. Evœ! I'll straight home, chaplet my brow and——

Machaon. Be your own corpse-adorner. He falls.

Can gentle gods thus disfigure their friends? I'll bear him hence.

4th Cit. Carrion for the flames!

[*Exit Mac. with Cit.*

Cleitophon. My words are the streak of light on the dial-plate of council; they mark the course of the time most expressly.

[*Re-enter Machaon.*]

Machaon. [*to Emath.*] You dog me like an avenger. How now?

Emathion. Machaon, I am sick.

Machaon. As the girl turned pale when Hymen on his marriage-day fell from his house much hurt. Keep from the north side the town, where the wind blows, and you'll live to in-urn us.

Emathion. Oh, it blows ill all quarters.

Megillus. I've heard it told, by whom I know not, in an impersonal whisper as it were, that Cephalus' tall daughter refused the love of the Bacchic priest, knocked it flat with the hand of her scorn, and 'twas hinted the city is plagued for this behaviour.

Acephalus. Then let us give her to his desire! We'll not die that she may pick lovers.

Cleitophon. The maid is of my kin, devout and chaste. I'll not have her infamously espoused. He's a brown vine-pole.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

Demophile [*to Emath.*]. Nephele prays you come to her.

She's dying, fluttering in the very breast of death, that sorely hurt the little thing in catching it. Come!

Machaon. Dost hear, Megillus?

Megillus. Business, business! [*Exit.*

Emathion. Don't touch me; go away!

Machaon. His light orbs are black, eclipsed with panic, and he's white as ass's milk. Go, forward, nurse. [*exit Demophile*] Emathion must protect the threatened honour of his sister. Music!

[*Enter Astynous and a band of revellers.*]

Astynous. Hail, friends! Death is a glutton we've sworn to pamper with a honeyed dish. We cram us with pleasure to sweeten its gullet. Ivy and ribbons! 'Tis a rare garnish! My bride was snatched from the marriage chamber, a pleasant morsel! I'll not be behind her in flavour when I'm swallowed up. Give me a cymbal! Who'll join us—dance—sing—shout! Strike up, comrades!

Eat and drink and twine your flowers,
Till we make a feast—not ours!

[*Exit with revellers.*

1*st Cit.* Choicest bullocks, wide-streaming wine, let us kill and pour before heaven, and call on Artemis for help.

2*nd Cit.* Nay, let us confess the Bromian with groans and orgies.

Machaon. My good friends, counsel is hydra-headed, 'tis authority alone hath unity of brain-power. Seek ye the voice of the godhead that fulfils the oaks of Dodona.

1st Cit. An oracle, an oracle!

2nd Cit. 'Tis wisely spoken; but the way is long. Pestilence keeps not Time's tardy paces. The city will be still ere we receive the message.

Cleitophon. Ye are deaf to my words, so 'twere best to seek the Holy Oracle.

Emathion [*to Mac.*]. Methinks I cannot breathe again till I get beyond the gate.

Machaon [*pointing to Emath.*]. Here is a windy-heeled messenger—Hermes-shod. Two years ago his feet swept the way to Dodona; he knows each turn of the road, each ford, bridge, and bye-path.

Emathion. I'll go to the very tether of my life to serve you.

2nd Cit. Spoken like a patriot.

1st Cit. 'Tis settled, he goes.

Acephalus. At once. No leave-takings!

Emathion. Now.

[*Re-enter Demophile.*]

Demophile [*to Emath.*]. You've stayed too long. She's quite still. But your father lies and asks for you as he grips at his vitals.

Emathion. Is it the plague?

Demophile. I should think it is the plague, if you were to see his face, hot as the dog-star.

Emathion [*gasping*]. No more—go away! [*to Mac.*] Have you anything to smell?

Machaon. Here's a sweet burnt herb for you.

Emathion. I can't go to my father. I've promised to

seek the oracle, and I've promised to start *now*, and my father taught me to love my country.

Demophile. Very well. You've a milky look for a patriot. There will nowhere be a father for you when you return, you'll be an orphan. I'll get some healthy woman from a clean house to put a little food in a scrip for you. An' to think he'll be an orphan! [*Going.*

Emathion. Nurse, say I love him—let him know that I love him. And say, nurse, that I was bound to my country. Poor old father, say that his pangs torture me. Say that you saw me go—*now.* [*Exit.*

All. Zeus be our helper!

1*st Cit.* A noble youth!

2*nd Cit.* He slew nature at the foot of his country. He's the boast of Calydon for beauty.

Machaon. There's suffusion in the eye of that man's judgment—though the boy's loveliness captivates. His golden head is perfect as Cytherea's apple.—What is it, my good nurse?

Demophile. Ægle is restless——

Machaon. What! your dear child that makes such trim wreaths?

Demophile. Her lap was full o' white violets that kept twitching off.

Machaon. I'll with you.—Disperse, friends. Plague, like the wolf, loves a flock. Scatter yourselves, and let confidence rule your pulses.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE IV.—*Nephele's Home. Callirrhoë with Nephele's body.*

Callirrhoë. How different from that fair Bacchic sleep
From which thou once did'st wake, my Nephele,
This hideous lifelessness! Ye gods! instead
Of the bright laughter of the dreaming lips
A grin is on the sharp, shrunk mouth; the cheek,
Moist with the balmy warmth of its own blush,
Now glistens beaded with a chilly sweat.
Once in delirium, when her speech came thick
As blood-clot through the edges of a wound,
Some memory of dewy morning-hills
I caught in her hot voice.
Oh, I must hide thee, bury thee; but first
My lips shall touch the cheek that lies against
My white robe like a tawny withered rose.
She'd cry to think my lips
Loathed her that once delighted in her mouth.
There, there! [*kisses the corpse*]
Love and the vultures are the only things
Death cannot sicken. All are gone from her;
Her parents, sisters; and Emathion
Came not to comfort her. What could it be
Delayed him? Now I need his help. But first
I will wind round thee my long veil; he ne'er
Shall see thee thus. [*Enter Demophile.*

Demophile. Oh, home, Callirrhoë;
Thy father sickens; he may now be dead.
[*Exeunt hurriedly.*

SCENE V.—*Dodona: the sanctuary on an eminence; at some distance the sacred grove of oaks and beeches. Enter Timarete, Nicandra, and Promenëia, who walks apart.*

Timarete. Observe!
Our sister mumbles; nods, and mumbles on.
As drivers shake the rein when horses lag,
So do we ancient women, with the head
Urge our slow tongues. She mumbles to herself.
Mark that!
Nicandra. I do.
Timarete. Observe, her yellow cheek
Is bronzy with the mixture of a blush.
Nicandra. I've marked it, sister!
Timarete. Chew'd it over?
Nicandra. Ay.
Timarete. Methinks there are unseemly diamond-sparks
A-turning in her eyes.
Nicandra. I've seen 'em, sister.
Like points of light they twinkle in the rheum.
Timarete. What is the meaning of 'em?
Nicandra. Folly.
Timarete. Ha, ha, hi!
Nicandra. She never was

As ancient, grave, and inaccessible
In nature as appearance.

Timarete. Say'st thou so?

Nicandra. We caught her once in weakness, two years gone.
She stood, her dry, old hands so tight, I wondered
They broke not into powder; her grey locks
Whirled, like the strips of bark when peels the birch,
I' the wind! She watch'd a man who left the shrine.
I laughed.

Timarete. And I.

Nicandra. Thou can'st remember it?

Timarete. Ay! how she made as she did watch a bird
That swept the sky above him. Ha! ha! hi!

Nicandra. Methinks it was this boy she watch'd!

Timarete. Hi, sister?

Nicandra. I say, methinks it was this boy she watch'd.

Timarete. Ay, an' he was a boy; light, curling hair
Did rib his head all over.

Nicandra. An' he came
From Calydon to question o' the famine.

Timarete. It is the same.

Nicandra. Art sure?

Timarete. Ay.

Promeneia. Would to heaven
He'd seen me when my brow was flat and white
As cleanly, folded linen! Now 'tis dirty

And crumpled up;
And there's no washing more for it, no well
To make it white; no press to make it flat.
Nicandra. 'Tis shameful thus to see the girl peep through
The casement of old womanhood. I fain
Would cuff the impudent wench in yon old face.
Timarete. Ye ancient gods! laugh not, nor jig my sides!
Promeneia. This mouth of mine,—its edges now turn back
Like those o' withered leaves! He'd kiss my lips?
He could not find 'em, they are down my throat.
Nicandra. Her dotage doth wax passionate.
Timarete. Hi, sister?
Nicandra. I say, her dotage doth wax passionate.
Timarete. E'en so.
Promeneia. Last night he shuddered when Nicandra's
Brown immense bosom pushed through its white wraps;
Timarete with blue-nailed finger-tip
Pointed. He hath not shuddered to my face!
Not yet!
Nicandra. 'Tis certain we must seek the shrine,
Get the response, and thus despatch her boy!
Timarete. She puts it off from day to day.
Nicandra. Poor crone!
So old and light; we'll do't!
Timarete. Well said; we'll do't.
Promeneia. Youth is the prodigal of golden wealth;

The middle term of life becomes a miser,
And clutches at the coins which still remain.
But old age is a lack-all and a beggar
Too foul for pity. Oh, he comes! I blush
For my peaked, leathery visage as for sin!
He's looking at my straggling chin,—O god!
And his so beautiful!

[*Enter Emathion.*]

Emathion. My reverend dames,
Whose holy mouths make verbal Heaven's will,
Again I do entreat that with high Zeus,
Th' omniscient Father, ye will hold converse;
And learn the cause of the dread pestilence
Engulfing human life; what angry god
Must be appeased; what hostile altars smoke;
What lamentations weary heaven's vault.
Ten days I wait; no oracle is given.
I shall be cursed, be followed like a child,
And found here playing truant, my good name
Dishonoured and my faith discredited.
I shall be ruined if the god is dumb.
Upon my knees I supplicate for grace.

Promeneia. What doth he say?

Timarete. Turn round thine other ear.

Emathion. O venerable sisters, grant my prayer!

Promeneia. The day is not auspicious.

Nicandra. False you speak.

Timarete. 'Twas yesterday.

Promeneia. Wrongly you calculate.

Timarete. Why, yesterday you said was not auspicious!

Promeneia. I did mistake, it was to-day.

Timarete. She dates
According to her wish. Within an hour
We will declare the oracles of Zeus.

Promeneia. Oh, not to-day! Oh, not to-day! Good youth
Be ruled, and force not heaven! Dreadful things
Will be declared; no comfortable word
Will issue from the beeches, they will groan
Hair-raising horrors, grisly messages.

Timarete. Give her no heed, or thou wilt be undone!

Nicandra. Be obdurate!

Promeneia. He wavers! [*clutching him*] Dearest youth,
I love you, and they hate!—Now he hath shuddered!

Emathion. O—h! loose me, hag! Nay, venerable maid,
Thy sacred grasp appalled me. I am honoured.

Promeneia [*aside*]. Contemptible old woman! never mutter
Love with thy hollow gums and ragged mouth;
For love must pass through gates of marbly teeth,
And open the red curtains o' young lips!

Timarete. A tear is hanging from her peaky nose.

Nicandra. I see, I see!

Promeneia. I'm jealous of my sisters.
At them he shuddered; but he shrieked at me.

[*She paces apart.*

Timarete. Young man,
Thou did'st not like her skinny fingering?
Then seek the oracle!
Nicandra. Thou did'st not like her mumble in thine ear?
Then seek the oracle!
Promeneia What will he say?
Emathion. I'll gladly seek it.
Timarete. Bring your woolly bough
This time an hour.
Nicandra. Tremble, and kneel, and pray.
Timarete. Come, Promeneia, since your leg is stiff,
Here is my hand to help.
Promeneia. Malignity.
I walk as well as you.
[*They descend the steps; Prom. falls.*
Timarete. She's on her shins!
Ha! ha! hi! I knew her leg was stiff!
Nicandra. Why, any one could see it! Let me rub 'em!
Timarete. She wants to rise. [*To Emath.*] I pray you pick her up.
Emathion. Is she hurt?
Nicandra. She's crying. Are you hurt, good sister?
Promeneia. Hurt, hurt. And yet he cares! Laughable age!
Your arm, and let me go!
Nicandra. You're humbler, sister!
[*Exeunt.*

Emathion. I laugh and curse. Faugh! they are filthy hags!
I'm sick at their great feet stuck round with corns,
And livid chins which seem to chew their breath.
They make me cold; I never was so cold.
Good heavens blast me
Before I grow like them! One says she loves me!
Keep down, disgust! O execrable hag!
I shall be ill with thought of her; and then
Her filmy eyes will mind me of my father's.
I promised once to close them, but 'tis certain
Our private promises must snap in twain
For country; and my sister
Would close them, ('twould have been most horrible
To drape the lid over the muddled orb!)
He always loved her best.
That execrable beldam! If she works
Upon me thus, I'm sure to have the plague.
I'll think not on her; yet, within an hour
I meet her! I'll be firm, get the response
And never seek an oracle again!

[*Exit.*

SCENE VI.—*Callirrhoë's Home.*

Callirrhoë. There are who think that ignorance is sin
Past pardon, since it is incurable
As blindness, when no faculty of sight
Is native to the eyes. I thus have err'd
Unconsciously, or wherefore could he die,

My father ? They are mine, these dead.

[*Enter Machaon.*]

Machaon. I come
With tidings of Emathion.

Callirrhoë. He was missed,
And missing, at two death-beds.

Machaon. I was near
Your brother when the word from Nephele
Was brought ; he shrivelled and turned white, so white
I put my arm in his and drew him off.

Callirrhoë. And little Nephele, you let her die
Without her lover.

Machaon. That is aptly said.
One coin less to old Chiron.

Callirrhoë. Afterwards
Did not Emathion hear that suddenly.
My father had been stricken ?

Machaon. Ay, he heard.
But there was that about him made me know
That if I let him look much on the sick
You would be brotherless.

Callirrhoë. Why, so I am,
Since my dear father on his death-bed found
That he was sonless. Silently he lay ;
But after any stirring at the door,—
The neighbours coming in with anxious step,—
He felt about among the fleecy wraps
For his boy's hand, and being baffled, died.

Machaon. Be not too harsh ; it is no cowardice,

Save on the battle-field, to shrink from death.
Fleet-limb'd Emathion from Dodona soon
Will fetch the remedy Æsclepiads
Are fools at mixing. Had I not prevailed
In urging the bewildered silly folk
To seek the oracle, you had been led
Ere now to Bacchus' altar, to allay
The jealous anger of the genial god
For scorn of young Coresus. You divine?

Callirrhoë. Would they had come and carried me away
To be their victim!

Machaon. Oh, leave me to choose
If there be sacrifice. There's Agatha,—
I pass her where she piles her pomegranates
Each day, and daily as I pass repent
I deal not, save for health, with poison-herbs.
Her crooked shadow is detestable;
A thing the sun must draw reluctantly.
Now, she would make
A pretty offering for the amorous god,
And the fair marble wall
She sets her fruit by be no more deformed
By the uncomely darkness of her shape.

Callirrhoë. Speak not profanely; they are mine, these dead.

Machaon. The air hath been unwholesome many weeks.
Women, disordered and intoxicate
Returning from their revel on the hills,

Have filled their homes with fever, and increased
A sickness that, without this irritant,
Had not exceeded in fatality
The plague of the great feast ten years ago.
Men were not then half frenzied, and a few,
Yielding to counsel, were restored to health.
Now all essay to heal is idleness,
Though one persuade and argue till one's hoarse,
So resolutely they refuse to touch
What has not magic in it. I deceive
No man, and so they die.

Callirrhoë. Oh, surely those
Whom the gods love live prosperous and blest.

Machaon. Love! The cow, with a pleasant consciousness of offspring, may feed the better her calf by her side. Such complacency my mother feels in my presence. 'Tis the sole definition of love my experience warrants. For my part, I've noted Heaven's best lovers are fortune's most cruel sport. Truly the enigma crumples one's eyebrows. Nay, crease not yours. They're not bristly enough to wrestle with the brain's pugnacious problems. Keep smooth-browed.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

Demophile. Oh, my child,
A fury rises 'gainst the Mænads. Some
By their dishevelled hair are haled about,
Trampled and wounded.

Machaon [*restraining Callirrhoë*]. Mine shall be the task.

I hate these Mænads, and can therefore keep
The crowd in check.
[*To Demophile.*] Ægle, the saffron-haired,
With my own hands I carried to the pyre.
So rest her ghost. Now for the angry crowd. [*Exit.*

Callirrhoë. And is your Ægle dead ?

Demophile. Nay, never mind.
You must not tilt my tears over like this.
I carried my grief straight until you spoke.
An' do not look such struggles—let the eyes
Throw down their silver shields and go to sleep.
Under the sycamore I'll settle you,
Where none have died, and there are many bees.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.—*The City. Anaitis, Dione, Mænads, Citizens.*

Anaitis [*dancing on a heap of cinders*]. Behold the remnants of the feast of death !
These little heaps, flame-bitten, in my hand,
Once comprehended tall and mighty men
Who scorned our god. The heavens make no sound,
Their laughter's in events. Thy raillery,
My god, these light feet shall commemorate,
Shall dance before thy presence in this town
Upon this carpet of transformèd men
Grey as a wolf-skin. [*Shouts.*

Woman [*rushing from the crowd*]. She is trampling down
My little girl !

1st Cit. Why, then we'll dance on her!
Ye gods!—the cinders of a smiling child
She tosses up like Ætna! Hark ye, fathers,
An' will ye bear the sight?
2nd Cit. We'll act our answer.
Down with the jackal laughing on our dead!
Anaitis. Evœ! Evœ!
3rd Cit. We'll trample her to death.
1st Cit. Ay, an' we'll force the lock of every joint
And strain the hinge of every sinew in
This hateful, impious body! Drag her on!
To the temple! Here's another. Break her up!
[*They seize Dione. Enter Machaon.*
Machaon. They'll kill her! Truly, as you love your lives,
I counsel you, good citizens, refrain
From this mad conduct. Look to it, my friends.
Just leave these crazy Mænads to their cubs;
Or if you will, drive them without the town;
Let them grow hungry on the hills, and feed
On quivering goat's flesh, but don't massacre,
Lest each slain Mænad cost a hecatomb
Of your best oxen, when Zeus' will is known.
1st Cit. The choice white breed! Methinks it were not ill
To wait the oracle. If we should err——
Machaon. A little injury done to the gods,
If measured by the expiatory vow,
Is worth avoiding.

[*Aside.*] See, Dione, through
That alley there is safety. [*Dione escapes.*
[*To Citizens.*] Hence with you.
To work; unceasing toil alone can dam
This pestilence from pouring on your air
Till but to breathe is death. Bestir yourselves.
[*Exeunt Citizens.*

[*Enter Coresus at a distance.*]

Ah! the mad priest! A most unsteady gait,
The face so lean you'd think those rolling eyes
Fed on 't, as thriving twins
Suck thin the mother; cast of countenance
Livid, with sudden flare that purples it!
Poor fool!

Coresus. Self-pity, prudent accusation!

Machaon. I spoke in comment, though soliloquy.

Coresus. I care not for your sneer, let it be tossed,
A petty fire-brand, to the heap of wrongs
On which this plague is fed. Insult again.

Machaon. His face is flaming! How combustible
Some faces are!—You've wrought a noble work,
If it be yours—this art of dyeing skins
And giving flesh the odour of stale fish.

Coresus. I hate the plague,
And you.

Machon. More rational, I merely hate
The sickness; you my science deprecates
A madman, dreaming that the heavens note
His anger of chafed passion, when a girl

Looks coldly on him.

Coresus. 'Tis insuff'rable,
The taunt! Speech weeps its impotence to quell
Such insult, as a stripling sees his sire
Murdered, and simply sobs upon his sword.
You dream I drew great Bacchus to suffuse
This many-peopled town in agony
At baulk'd desire? [*Mach. nods.*] No; for the thankless-
ness,
The triple-hided hebitude that pain
Alone can penetrate. A dog will take
The bone you throw to him; a mortal stares
In obstinate hostility if one,
Longing to swell the number of his joys,
From laden hand beseech him to be blest.
Teach men to suffer, and the slaves are apt;
Give them fresh hope, entreat them to delight
They grow as stubbornly insensible,
As miser to a beggar's eloquence,
Clutching their clownish imbecility
As the gods grudged them that.

Machaon. Men's hopes, desires
Are difficult of transport; you must take
The mule's path up the customary pass.

Coresus. Cursed be the brain that sees the waking light
And keeps by Hecate's besmearèd tombs;
Accursed the heart that at dithyrambic rush
Of chorus keeps its measured Doric beat;

And cursed the palsied who, at cymbal's clash,
Forget not age.

Machaon. Nay, modesty avers
It is not decent for old men to dance.

Coresus. Cursed the lame creature, custom, that should go
'Mong men a laughter for its hobbling gait,
And sets them all a-hobbling, emulous.
Cursed be the piety——

Machaon. I counsel you
Restrain your votaries, their irony
Of mirth is hateful in the midst of woe
Such as our Calydon bemoans. I fear
You'll find a broken form, the life blood spilt,
Against your shrine.

Coresus. He will put all to rights.

[*Callirrhoë passes with a band of mourners.*

[*Exit Coresus suddenly.*

Machaon. I'm fain to envy these god-beset mortals. Those above may be but indifferent judges of our actions; yet the immense stimulus of spectators! One cannot always pluck a man by the gown to force him listen, and thinking 's such a rare gymnastic o' the brain, 'tis pity none note it. What a public we have if our pates are verily unroofed to divinity! And yet mortals take it, the gods know no more than what they tell 'em in their prayers. This praying, how shall we define it, if it be not to take a god by the chin tenderly and detain him with the small gossip of one's wishes, fears,

and expectations? There's my mother! Her whole religion is an anthology of Olympic scandal. My contempt of her hath brought me to this cynicism. Pah! I was surely wrapt in the cradle-flame of immortality; then pried my maternal parent, and spoilt all.

[*Exit.*

Scene VIII.—*Dodona: the sacred grove. Timarete, Nicandra, and Promeneia under three oaks, with their arms lifted. A smoking altar at some distance. Emathion advances to the confines of the grove and kneels.*

Emathion. I hear a sound as if the branches snored,
Hollow and peaceful! What if I should die,
Die suddenly? 'Tis possible, for terror
Oft kills at once. My heart's a stone
That doth depress my side most grievously.

[*The wind keeps rising.*

The trees wake up. The air is full of noise.
Those ancient women have their hour of grandeur;
Their wrinkles now become them. I shall die!
This shrieking wind will kill me! All the leaves
Stretch out their tongues at me! Why don't they speak?
They move them up and down, and make a noise
As dumb men do, and struggle hideously.
I listen, but there's nothing, nothing, nothing!

[*A whirlwind.*

Oh, see!
The wind is flaring round the dreadful sisters;

They're twisting spirally ! Their hair, their hair !
The wind is carrying it all away
Like whisps of straw !
I think their scarfs will strike against my head,
They seem to grow so long and come so near ;
And that I feel would kill me. Heaven help !
What myriad tongues wag at me from the trees !
Would I could hold them still, or tear them out ;
But that would want a million hands ! O gods !
There's something in the wind which is not noise.
A voice, a voice !

Timarete. Yes !

Promeneia. Yes !

Nicandra. Yes !

Timarete. Vainly the tomb-fires flashed where the lightning-flame was the midwife
Rending from Semele's womb the boy Zeus had gotten in godhead :
Cephalus' daughter hath scorned the Mænad-cares and Coresus.

Promeneia. Therefore Zeus will grant no pause from plague ere the maiden
Haughty to Evius' priest shall try the feel of his altars,—
Knife through the milkless breast or riving the throat's spouting vessel.

[*Emathion shrieks and falls senseless.*

Nicandra. Keen as the famished for bread, a god in his vengeance claims victims.
Yet will heaven receive the life laid down for another :

Who for Callirrhoë dies, atones her sin of rejection.

Timarete. Hear!

Promeneia. Hear!

Nicandra. Hear!

[*The wind slowly goes down and they come out of the grove.*

Promeneia. Where is he? Gone so soon!

Timarete. What doth she say?

Nicandra. Hi, sister?

Timarete. What doth she say?

Nicandra. Asks where he is.

Timarete. Along the road—good boy!

Promeneia. Emathion, Emathion, Emathion!

Timarete. Her voice—the very squeaking of a mouse!

Nicandra. Could not be heard the other side o' the bush.

Promeneia. Emathion, Emathion, Emathion!

Timarete. She's got it up now to the shriek of an owl.

Nicandra. Give her an echo; he'll not answer her. "Emathion."

Promeneia. He must be far away! I shout so loud.

Nicandra [*stumbling against Emathion*]. Why what is this? The stripling; and stone dead!

Timarete. Nicandra, help me down upon my knee. He hath but fainted. I can feel his heart. He'll soon come round, and here's a nurse for him.

[*Showing Promeneia.*

My back! Nicandra, help me up! My back! Oh, oh! my back! There—gently, sister!—ho!

Come, Promeneia, squat beside your boy,
Crook up your squeaking knee-joints till he wake.
[*To Nicandra.*]
That lunge you gave me, sister, might a' loosen'd
The roots o' my back ; it almost feels torn up.
I'll thank thee for my stick ; it's by the altar.

Nicandra. I'll fetch it, stay ! [*Exit.*

Timarete. And, Promeneia, hold me up a bit.

Promeneia. I will not. I must light the lamp o' this face.

Gone out completely.

Timarete. Do, and let me fall. [*Re-enter Nicandra.*
Here's my Nicandra, with her harder heart,
Hath brought my stick. We'll shake along together
Who know that we are old and relative.
[*To Promeneia.*]
Paint, dress in wanton robes !
The interim of this swoon cries out for use ;
He'll wake and worship. Thank me, and we'll go.
[*Exeunt.*

Promeneia. There's something in it.
I have a pot whose red conserve would dye
The very tint of nature, and a robe
Of richest grain—my mother's—with a hem
That shines as if the sun was underneath
And edged it, as I've often seen a cloud,
And . . . I will do 't ! . . . No, no ! I will not do it.
If he can love, he loves me as I am,
A brown old woman, shrivelled till her veins

Stand out like those in a mare's side. He's long
In coming to himself. I am a fool!

[*She sits by his head, her arms round her knees and her chin on them.*

Now I can use him as I will; can gloat
Upon him till my eyes are gorged; can take
His hair up in my hand, thus, thus! A curl
Has caught my finger. He would give to me
A golden ring, a ring; and I will have it
If my one tooth must go. Nay, I have scissors
To cut away this precious bit of him
Which loves me. There! And I can kiss him too.
Can pluck the kisses from his lips as feathers
From strangled birds: and so I will, I will.
I'll pull them from his lips, thus—thus, and thus!

[*Kisses him.*

He stirs!—Emathion!—and he looks at me!

Emathion. Are you my grandmother!

Promeneia. Even so.
Now he will love me.

Emathion. Yet she died, I know.
How old am I? She watched me when a child.
'Tis very strange! Where am I? Who are you?

Promeneia. Your grandmother, who never really died,
But went to keep the oracle of Zeus.
Emathion, you are very like your mother;
I watch'd you as you slept, and that revealed it!
Kiss me! I hope you'll love me.

Emathion. I am not like my mother. I am told

No son was so unlike ! Callirrhoë
Is like her ! Oh! Callirrhoë—the oracle !
There's something weighs upon me—just as if
A foot was on my heart. Oh, I remember !
You are that damned old woman, and you lie
To call yourself my grandmother ! I live
To bear the anguish of my sister's death.
'Twas you said she must die.

Promeneia. 'Twas I that warned you from the oracle ;
I, even I. You would not listen then,
Deaf as an adder. Ah ! I see, you think
That I'm too old a purse to have within
The golden coins o' kindness.

Emathion. No help, no help ! She'll make a beautiful corpse. But she must die first, and all the pain of it, the bleeding, the struggles ; there's what makes me shudder, and I must tell them to do it ; and there's no hope, no help !

Promeneia. But there is.

Emathion. What ! Help ?

Promeneia. Will you kiss me to tell you ?

Emathion. Kiss you ! No !—Yes.

Promeneia. Thus further spake the oracle :
Yet will heaven receive the life laid down for another ;
Who for Callirrhoë dies atones her sin of rejection.

Emathion. Some one may die for her, die instead of my sister. She has many lovers—and old Cleitophon—and——

Promeneia. You——

Emathion. Promised . . . I must give it, although I heave. I can't descend her mouth; it's a valley. There! [*kisses her*] A—ho!

Promeneia. He's erased it from his lips like a blot! He's rubbing it off still. Oh, the full, fleshy mouth, it was like a bee coming down a dried-up flower,—the roundness, the softness, the warmth came down my hard crevice, and there was no honey for 't.

Emathion. This place hath given me a sickness for life. I'll away. I'm going with my horrible news to catch the plague and die. Oh, I can't go home!

Promeneia. Then stay, stay, oh, stay with me! I'll ask for no more kisses again,—never again, I swear.

Emathion. Better the plague, for 'tis a short sickness. I must go home, for I should be tracked if I went elsewhere; I should be killed if I stayed here,—and some one will die for her! I'm going.

Promeneia. Never! I'll have you seized; you must return.

Emathion. I'll return if I die not; on my faith, I'll return, for I mislike you not so much now I discover your great love, which makes the scale of my favour heavy. [*Aside.*] I'll lie my breath away to escape, for I'll never, never, never return; and I loathe her as the smell of a goat. [*Aloud.*] I'll but take the oracle to my city, and then return, so the plague pleases.

Promeneia. You will?

Emathion. I will.

Promeneia. I hope

You are as true as you are beautiful!

Emathion. Trust me! Farewell.

Promeneia. Do you affect me enough to——

Emathion. Shake your kind and honest hand.

Promeneia. To——

Emathion. You swore. There's my hand. I'll return. There's flutter in the beeches! And they'll speak. There's a wind rising, and they'll speak, and I could not bear it. They'll say I must die! They're beginning! But I'll not hear!

[*Rushes off.*] Oh, I am leaving hell! [*Exit.*

Promeneia. He's torn my vital parts from out o' me
And carried them away. Yet he'll give back
My life to me. He said he would return:
He said it twice. He also said he liked me—
The dun old woman, with my bits o' hair
That hang like sheep's wool on a wither'd thorn.
He said it! Look, he's on the distant road,
A precious bead that rolls down a white thread.
He drops, and there's the thread without the jewel!
Yet he'll return.
He said so! I am mad to think he will.
He would not kiss me, would not look at me.
He never will return.
Then will I go to him, though bowed with age,
Bowed almost double as a sail with wind.
I'll go to-morrow; nay, to-night; nay, now.
My stick, and kindly lifts in car and waggon
Will help me on. And here I cannot stay.

I'm not an owl or bat that hates the light;
I love it, and the light is in his face.

[*Exit: on the other side re-enter Timarete and Nicandra pointing after her.*

Timarete. Ha! ha!

Nicandra. Hi, hi!

Timarete. Ha, ha!

Nicandra. Hi, hi! Light crone!

Timarete. Sister, she's good to make me cry a bit.
There's nothing touches me, and I must laugh
To find a use for tears. Upon my jowl
There's one that tickles me.

Nicandra. It is a flea.
I've got it! Ay, for laughter I could sob.

Timarete. It's comforting, the moisture, when your eyes
Are dry as beetle-cases. Her's are damp,
So damp I wonder that there are no frogs
Within 'em; yet she thinks that men can love
Peer in their dank enclosures.

Nicandra. Naughty sister!
You'll force me to a crying bout o' mirth.
Hi! hi!

Timarete. Ha! ha! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.—*A room in Aglauria's house. Machaon is discovered sitting meditatively with some manuscripts before him.*

Machaon. 'Tis strange what it costs to make people attend. Now, I can consider this disease with as great

intensity as Tantalus his o'er-hanging fruit. To ensure eager scrutiny, you must put an object out o' reach. That's why men are so fond of religion. It ever eludes them, and yet looks graspable. Ay, and there's some natural hunger in the heart too. Thin-stomach'd Tantalus and the bonnie golden gourd splitting open! 'Tis a pathetic sight! But here's the Augean stable to cleanse, and the dung must be carried shoulder-wise. My friends join the exploring party in search of the river Alpheus, to turn into it. I am left to toil by shovelfuls. If men had patience, and would not look away from life, I could make their existence tolerable.

[*Goes to a cupboard and looks for something, singing.*]

Have mortals then found that life goes so well
With gods to follow?
I have cracked the world as a walnut-shell,
And found it hollow.
They must be bored who never are alone,
It can't be pleasing;
Yet with one's self for ever to be thrown
Is not heart-easing.

[*Draws out a child's hand for dissection.*

Oh, I turn to my scalpel as a girl to her spindle! Here's a bit of dissecting to help me recover my temper. What delicate work is this! What fineness of texture. I will keep the secret of it, though. The arts of introspection are not for the crowd, nor the tunesome comment of my throat on its follies.

[*Sings.*] I with the tedious Machaon walk :
It does not strike me
That we shall have much philosophic talk,
He is so like me.

Yet they who fondly with the gods debate,
In tittle-tattle
Are heard, or rather on their pate
Hear thunder rattle.

[*Begins dissecting.*

A pretty hand ! The little Ægle's dead—
Hers was more dimpled. How she loved to pat
My cheeks ! Of late she grew a little shy—
For childhood's calyx shrivels when 'tis time
For bright-leaved girlhood. Little Ægle's dead !

[*Knocking.*

Away my hand and scalpel !

[*Puts them carefully away ; enter Aglauria.*

Ah, the briony ! But you look, for all the world, like a Mænad, mother, with those dangling trails about you. These berries will be serviceable ; yet I would not have my gentle mother put in peril of her life when I covet an extract. Since the rage has set in against these flower-filleted lassies, one can scarce crown one's wine-cup unsuspected.

Aglauria [*laying down the briony*]. There, child, for thy fancy ! And I know not the peril I would shrink from to please thee ; so only thou wilt be wary thyself, and not scuffle in the street for the rescue of these vile

foreign women. Does report say true, thou did'st stand by some Mænad, whose flesh the crowd was about to strip off with her ivy?

Machaon. Ay. For the case grew semi-surgical.

Aglauria. Well, if you're chief physician to *that* band,
Old Cleitophon will trouble you no more
With stories of his ague.

Machaon. Then he'll die.

Aglauria. Thine is unruly babble. Cephalus,
If thou had'st talked more softly of the gods,
Had doubtless chosen thee his son-in-law.
And the girl's dowry——

Machaon. Had been recompense
More than a hundred Cleitophons for cure
Of their particular infirmities
Could e'er enrich me with. Oh, I will sigh,
"Doubtless we have offended heaven," when next
Blight falls upon the land. There is no trick
Like sighing. Mother, in the mimicry
I will be perfect.

Aglauria. Fie, you cunning boy;
'Twill be Callirrhoë you're sighing for;
But if you'd win her, never more be seen
Saving of Mænads.

Machaon. Mother, do you know
It was Dione that I saved from death?

Aglauria. You speak as she were mine—a wayward girl
Her father could not curb—a restless sprig.

And not thy sister. Mark, Machaon, this—
If thou befriend the witless thing, the crowd
Will turn on thee. Just let them have their way.
But do thou keep to the old gods, and soon
I'll deck thee a fair bride-bed.

Machaon. So—so-ho !

Aglauria. I'll get thy supper.

Machaon. Let it be a quail ;
And melons, mother, melons ! [*Exit Aglauria.*

Ay, she's fair, the strong, lithe, shapely girl, yet not for me. And I marvel not the women of Lemnos slew fathers, husbands, brothers, and put an end to population till they could furnish their brats with heroic fatherhood. Oh, we fail not in the stuff of motherhood ; but the heroes—the heroes ! There's Emathion, a beautiful greyhound at the heels of Circumstance. Yet his sister dotes on him. It enrages me. I'll back to my work.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Citadel of Calydon: Acephalus, Megillus; Machaon on a higher level.*

Machaon. Truly this is to affect the god. Thus the Olympians, choosing a vauntage-ground above the field, watch men's passions interact. Well, I can do it, and play the god. 'Tis all I can. There's Acephalus, retributive, alert, with tight lips where no breath passes.

[*Enter Cleitophon.*]

Here's old Cleitophon! He makes the hill-brow his afternoon stroll—nothing perturbed; for the pious have buzzings from their own bosoms they interpret oracularly, —a small Dodonic grove in the rocky region of their prejudices that knows which way the wind blows. How now, Megillus? Those rosy cheeks belie the rueful visage.

Megillus. Why, doctor, I shall be a poor man if the young fruits keep shrivelling. There's a blight in nature; something offends. Could you counsel me?

Machaon. You remember that round the temple of Æsclepius some folks are stationed, with brains, to be referred to if the divinity be not curative. Why, man, you are the only mortal, not half-crazed by sorrow, who

has had sense to apply to me. Now I'll tell you, the gods hate inhuman parents. Don't tremble so; the destruction of a few figs is light punishment! I advise you be patient—Ah! [*starting*]—and go help my mother up the hill; the steepness distresses her.

[*Exit Megillus.*

Yes, truly, 'mid the dotted dark of yon patch of vine something stirred. Then I lost it in the cypress grove; yet I'll fasten my eye on the near edge of the black trees. If he keep the path he cannot issue un-noted. Meanwhile, I'll divert these watchers and myself by learning their unofficial predictions; if these clash with the oracle, how the fools will be crest-fallen!

[*Enter Megillus with Aglauria.*]

Aglauria. I see you climb
Daily the hill as I; 'tis well to learn
How thinks the oracle before one thinks.

Acephalus. You're curious. The plague has harmed you not; but should you care—that son you have so doted on—to leave his clammy corpse, and learn how the winds blew over Dodona's oaks? An' though it felled the Titan branches, could it trouble you? Hard woman, I say Chiron must crowd his boat for the return passage he ever makes in solitude, ere this calamity be repaired.

Machaon. Well, if we're all bid straight get drunk and dance,
My comely mother, will you lead the step?

Aglauria. I shall do what is best.

Machaon. Time-serving is the true elastic mean

Between devoutness and rank blasphemy.
I err in the defect. Old Cleitophon
Is piety stone-blind. [*To Cleito.*] What will you do
If faun-skins become ordinary wear
In Calydon; will you be singular?

Cleitophon. We need no oracle to show our deeds
Clear heinousness. We know where lies the guilt—
By Artemis' lone altars. [*Enter Demophile.*

Machaon. My good nurse,
What brings you to the brow?

Demophile. Care of my child.
Dear heart! But yester-night a mother brought
A dead stark babe and threw it at her feet.
Since then she has not cried at all. She sits
And spins, and sometimes in an altered voice
Sings snatches of her songs.

Acephalus. He comes! he comes!

All. Where, where?

Acephalus. Out o' the cypress-grove, and he brings death.

Aglauria. Machaon, he is here!

Machaon. Hum! Would you make my knowledge know?

Aglauria. Knew you?

Machaon. Ay, you begot a prophet.

Megillus. We'll make him answer for his sloth.

Acephalus. Sharply.

Machaon. Now to this people in extreme distress
The gods will give some riddle; it diverts

The pain of heart-ache to perplex men's heads ;
I have oft tried it. How divinity
Is imitative of my ways, or I
At heart oracular of the divine !

Aglauria. Oh, see, he comes ! Let each man shut his mouth ;
Now shall we learn where lies the safest way.

Acephalus. The safest way ! I'll learn where lies the guilt. [*Rushes to meet Emathion.*

Demophile. Oh, now my girl will have her fears relieved !

Cleitophon. Now will the Bacchic worship be supprest ;
The land made clean !

Megillus. Haply by sacrifice.
Whatever may be asked for we must give.

Machaon. Truth, father ! thinking little of thy life,
If the gods fancy that.

Megillus. My life ! Let those who have begot this plague
Die to allay it, if 'tis so decreed.

Machaon. Great zeal for justice ! Now I think of it,
That very day you beat poor Nephele,
The pestilence—
Before it was a summer sickness—grew
Deadly in force. That I distinctly marked.
The gods, discriminative, will adjust—

Aglauria. Peace ! [*Enter Acephalus, dragging Emathion.*

Good Emathion, why so haggardly
Approachest? Speak, for the plague rages still.

Acephalus. They are all ashes in the city. Give
A victim to our vengeance.

Demophile. Speak, she dies,
Callirrhoë, if you delay—

Emathion. *She dies!*
Gods, ye said truly. Why, what need of me.
Oh, is she dying fast?

Machaon. How dare you tax
A man o'er-heated, unrefreshed? He raves.
Give him some drink. Rest on my arm awhile,
And then interpret what the doves and oaks
In concert with Dodona's breezes spoke.

Emathion. What! Have you heard it, the great clashing wind?

Machaon. You see, the prophet's vacancy disturbs brain's normal action.

[*Enter a crowd of Citizens.*]

1*st Cit.* Speak! the oracle.

2*nd Cit.* Speak, or we'll tear your throat to find the words!

3*rd Cit.* What is it? What's to do?

Machaon. Emathion, make a clean breast of it.

Emathion. Oh, the burthen of the oracle! the wind seemed in labour of it, and moaned heavily.

1*st Cit.* Do you think, man, we care for its mumbling? [*They lay hold on Emath.*

Emathion. She's to die, do you hear? And the

oracle—though the wind could not bring it to the birth, —you shall have it—as the women tore the sobs out. Callirrhoë herself, so she find none to die for her, must die for scorn of Evius' priest.

It said the knife—
It said—through her milkless—— Oh, Machaon !

Machaon. I'm a favourite with the babies; they're always for my shoulder. You see here's a big one requesting it. You're too old for a ride. What shall I do with you? I'd laugh him into manhood.

Demophile. But we will die.
I will die gladly, and who would not die?

Machaon. Oh, doubtless many will give votes for death,
Writing a comrade's name upon the shell,
Never their own, for that were insolent
Self-choice in privilege. Nurse, not so fast.
Think you Emathion will not joyfully
Prevent you to preserve Callirrhoë.

Emathion. Who—I? Why must it be her very blood.
Is there not one who loves her in this town
Would succour her? [*Silence.*] Or if indeed her blood,
My uncle Cleitophon, I know your care
And scrupulous observance towards the gods.
You have been foremost in misguided zeal;
And now will doubtlessly desire to bear
The chiefest penalty.

Machaon (*aside*). He dug his nails

Into my hand as vulture in its corpse.
But I'll not be the still prey of his fears.
Let him look to 't.

Cleitophon. Except one die for her !
Were not obedience most precise if she
Herself should die ?

Aglauria [*looking anxiously at Machaon*]. Well said ; a substitute
Will never satisfy. Thalia asked
This onyx ring of me. I prize the hoop,
And gave instead chalcedony fair set ;
But ever on my finger jealously
She hath kept watch. Is it not laughable
To think the gods would take a shrunken thing
As you, or me, or indeed any one
But just the dainty creature of their choice ?

Machaon. Try them, Emathion ; you are young and fair.

Emathion. She never would consent. You, all of you
Refuse ? Why, uncle, I ne'er had a doubt
You would not by a decade forestall death.

Cleitophon. It is a pious maiden ! Shall we learn
How lies her will before we intervene
With fond, precipitate suggestion ?

1st Cit. Her will ! 'Tis settled she must die for us.
She dies ! She must ! she shall !

Machaon. And you speak reason.
We must not waver ; yet an instant pause.

Hold a brief council 'mong yourselves ; meanwhile
I'll learn the exact conditions, truth's details,
From this poor boy. Soon as we clearly know
Th' ordained victim, we'll go fetch the priest.
Misread a word o' the oracle, we lay
Fresh miseries upon us. [*Citizens talk apart.*

[*To Emathion.*]

Look you here !
She must not die,—
Why, I would die to save her. Save I will,
But never pander to a priestly fool.
Go, bid her fly by the far entrance,
And fly yourself,—there ! Change your feet to wings.
And, nurse, prepare and have in readiness
Old garments fitted to dress up escape.

[*Exit Demophile.*

Stare not so aimlessly ; address the crowd
One moment, ere you flee.

Emathion. I cannot tell—I—I will die for her !

Machaon. You ! till the knife gleams,—but presumably—

Come, exercise your rhetoric ; the crowd
Will tear you if you tender not the word,
And promise instant reparation.
Offer to die for her ! I'll see you safe.

Emathion. Good citizens,
Behold me here a wretched, doomèd man,
You thought to welcome a deliverer ;
Suppliant I clasp your knees. Most faithfully

I served you, not neglecting any rite,
And for reward
Learn that this city must be purified
By blood—my sister's or——
Machaon. He'll choke to death.
Emathion. My own,—
If none whom life abuses takes this means
Of ridding him of all its miseries.
1st Cit. We will not listen, we have died enough.
Come, we will bind you.
Machaon. Softly, gentle friends.
Emathion misinterprets in his haste
To save his sister. 'Tis the girl must die,
If she accept not one to die for her.
Most manifestly she will never choose
Her only brother; me she would but flaunt
As somewhat liberal in my censorship
Of certain phases of Olympic life.
A victim must be passive as a sheep,
Ba-minded, or he'll irritate. You all
Are well content Callirrhoë should die.
She will be well content. Yet ruffianly
To fright and bind her were inhuman. Pause,
[*To Emath.*]
Keep from her doors a moment's interim.
Prepare your sister. We will keep the brow.
[*Exit Emath.*

SCENE II.—*Callirrhoë's Home. Enter Callirrhoë and Emathion.*

Callirrhoë. What says the oracle?

Emathion. The word is you must die, ere Calydon
Be saved—except . . .

Callirrhoë. Why pause you? Give me all.

Emathion. One die for her. My uncle Cleitophon
Refuses, holding precious his grey hair.

Callirrhoë. My brother, what said he?

Emathion. Callirrhoë, if you would have it so . . .
If so . . . but yet . . .
'Twas your peculiar impiety,
Slighting Coresus' love, that brought the town
To this great pass. . . But if you'd have it so . . .
Callirrhoë, have it . . .

Callirrhoë. None will die for me?

Emathion. Not Cleitophon; the elders were all mute.

Callirrhoë. It is not that.
You will not die for me. Indeed, I thought
The city loved me.

Emathion. My dear sister, think.
Men love their lives. You know not how it hurts—
The spectral crowd and the grim ferryman—
Sharp from the burning sunshine and blithe youth.
Come to Demophile's.
My dearest, fly, and we shall both be saved.

Callirrhoë. My city—I will save it! Oh, be soothed
Poor mother, bending o'er thy tortured babe;—

It will recover. You, Emathion,
Say to this people I in ignorance
Have wrought them evil, let them flock to see
The expiation.

Emathion. No. I'll never see
Knife near your breast.

Callirrhoë. Although you pierced it through,
Emathion, when I knew you could not die
To save me. Think'st thou I had suffered it,
My beautiful, so amorous of the light?
What, give my mother's only boy to death!
Not so. I was a little grieved you failed,
But so you failed at the palæstra once,
Itys proved stronger—was it possible?
And so I kissed you. Now I add farewell!

Emathion. Farewell, farewell! What would you have me do?
What do you mean? To leave me raving mad,
To wander round the temple? Stay with me,
Stay with me, succour, teach me to escape!
I shall go mad. I'm like a lighted torch—
There's fire upon my head. Deliver me!

Callirrhoë. Vex not my few last breaths. Be serious.
Demophile will tend you faithfully,
Nay, dote on you. Think of Callirrhoë
Where she hath been most happy, by the brook;
And of my father, raising to his lips
My little twy-eared bowl.

Emathion. No, not like that;—

Lying in bestial death i' the midst of blood.
Well, you must love this taste o' the shambles, love it,
To choose it. There, they'll drag me. From the hill
I hear them shriek Emathion. 'Tis like
Actæon with the hounds about his heart!
Pull them away!

Callirrhoë. Emathion, be calm.
Fear not this people; 'tis for me they cry.
You, by this secret portal shall escape
And take the narrow cliff stairs to the home
Of good Demophile, who ever watches
Her children's blanching faces. Stay with her
Till you see health's bright tincture on their cheeks;
That is the sign that Calydon is saved,
And all at peace.

Emathion. You . . .?

Callirrhoë. Think you have left me at the spinning-wheel. [*Shuts and bolts the door behind him.*
And that is true. A few more fateful threads!
The scissors blink on me. How very still
It is. They're waiting me. My little bed
Looks dreary, as they'd newly borne away
A corpse from it; ay, and a maiden corpse,
No children crowd to kiss.
To give one's body, with its great desire
For love—the very love it's fashioned for,
As firebrand for the flame-tip—to be cut
Away from sense, so that unlovingly
Men will behold it! Oh, my Hylia!

Death caught you sudden in a husband's arms!
He hath mistook his place—the rear of love,
Never the vanward. Shame on me! They come!
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A hill-side, Calydon; on the opposite height a troop of Mænads. Enter Coresus.*

Coresus. These lovely ranks I've marshalled for the god,
And the plague-heaps o' the city! Oh, it's vile,
That work; it crazes me. All sights are turned
To madness; all the deep tenacious loves
Drop from my life. Anaitis dead; the faun—
And I had sought for him the whole night through—
My faun. I found him in a moony nook;
So deep his slumber, an arbutus-bell,
Fallen on his lid, there lay; a woodmouse curled
Asleep upon his breast; the topmost lock
On's head hung loose as aspen-leaf to the wind.
Save for that little touch
Of life's disorder, I had feared, he lay
In stillness so deep-settled.—Were she hurt,
Hurt to the very quick! All's well with *her*,
I'm left with my torn Mænads. I'd not live
To be the butt of my malediction,
But for the oracle,
The oracle, that yet may ruin her.
It's a way of tracking guilt down to the seed,
And the guilt's her's. My hands are stained with it

As the dyer's with the Tyrian—she's the stuff
Red to the fibre. (*Enter Dione.*) What o' the oracle?

Dione. Oh, nothing of the oracle?

Coresus. Then, indeed,
Nothing of note.

Dione. The bleating children come
Up here. I find them wet-faced i' the cold.

Coresus. It's nothing; it's the plague.

Dione. No; the flesh was sound, but the face had a sort of cry in it. Methinks it died for its mother.

[*Enter Messenger.*]

Messenger. Oh, quick, Coresus, for from the oracle Emathion hath returned, and the word is, Cephalus' daughter must die for the insult done to Evius' priest. They've brought her to the altars. None will die for her. She's waiting. Quick! or she'll not feel it, if you're laggard.

Coresus. Will she faint?

Messenger. No; her face grows sharp and hard as sculpture. She must bleed. Oh, come to her! The plague will not budge while she's breathing.

Coresus. What! No quiver till the knife-thrust? Dionysus, I thank thee for this rare victim. All things to my hand. Yet 'tis possible she escape me. All's marred if one die for her. How said you?

Messenger. None will die for her; she, Callirrhoë, stands at the altar steps.

Dione. Callirrhoë! It's the girl with the blind father, that sings.

Corseus. Sings! Have you heard her of late, have you marked her?

Dione. To bring all this death! No marvel they'l not die for her.

Coresus. Peace, fool! The plague's mine. I own it. Did you say none would die for her? Deaf, deaf, the whole city full. O Dionysus, thou tormentest as a god!

Dione. The people perish. Think! they're innocent. Save them.

Coresus. The plague's mine; her blood's mine. I thirst for it. To uncistern her very heart! And to think one must get at it as at a beast's heart!—her heart —Callirrhoë's. See the great knife be sharp. To the altars! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Demophilé's house. A child in a cradle. Enter Demophile with some clothes.*

Demophile. There they be—ancient hoods and coarse old wraps. This will hang about my girl; and there's a gown will sit on the sturdy doctor to the very life; an' this will muffle up the boy. I've kept the dingiest for the boy; he's so much beauty to hide. May they all prosper! The babe sleeps My babes were all restless; but they rest now. [*Knocking.*] Who's there?

Emathion [*without*]. Nurse, nurse, nurse!

Demophile [*opening the door*]. All right, it is all right. Everything's ready.—But what haps that you look so wild and ashy? Is it well with her?

Emathion. No; ill, ill!

Demophile. Would she not fly?

Emathion No, no. She wanted to die. It's against nature, but she wanted to die.

Demophile. Is she gone?

Emathion. Yes, yes! Shut the door! She's no hinges like that! You can't move her.

Demophile. 'Tis a brave lass, an' I'm glad my milk went to her making. An' you've left her to die, you wretched, puny brother? Why, she'd have given you her blood like a pelican—the tender white thing she is! When you slapt her in the face and I cuffed you, how she flushed up and coddled you with her cooing "There then." Yes, hang your head and set your lips a-trembling! I'm glad on 't. An' let me tell you, I never liked you, and to-day I think you're nothing but offal. I've a good mind to throw you out o' doors.

Emathion. O nurse, have pity! Let me stay. She *will* die, and she sent me here.

Demophile. There's no time to spare. Be a good boy, a good, loving boy, and come wi' me to die for her. As the kernel's in the hard nut, is happiness in this hard death. If not . . . Will you come?

Emathion. I dare not—I cannot; and she sent me here.

Demophile. Then stay, and rock the babe—it's all you're good for. If I return not, take it to it's mother, Theron's wife. Mind what I say, and rock it.

[*Exit.*

Emathion [*dropping on a stool and rocking mechanically*]. Oh, I'm unspeakably wretched. And this hateful child knows not, cares not, with its even humming breath and its eyes, like two doves' nests with sleep on them. I can't bear it! I must pinch the child to make it feel a little, feel pain with me. It shall not mock me; it shall be hurt like me, be miserable. [*Pinches it.*] There! But it does not content. I must out. I must, I must, I must see all! Her blood draws me like a cord to my ankle. They won't note me if I crouch down. And I must go, wretched, wretched Emathion!

[*Exit stealthily.*

SCENE V.—*Without, afterwards within, the Temple. Enter Callirrhoë, Machaon, Megillus, and Citizens.*

Callirrhoë. My people, I am come to die for you;
Curse me no more. To-night in Calydon
There shall be health and sleep.
1st Cit. Hurry her on!
My children peak and pine, and I must watch
My own good flesh I gave 'em drop away
Like the patrimony of a prodigal.
2nd Cit. My father's eye was red
As embers on the hearth. Oh! let her die
Before it is a cinder in his head.
Old Man. My arm's hot. Let her die
Before my stomach burn, and then my pyre!

Soldier. Push on, push on, ye sluggards! Swords and knives!
I'd make a quicker business.
Sculptor. Ah! superb
Her attitude! With thong of her own fingers
She's bound her arms back from surrendered breast.
I've got a subject that will make me great.
Woman. The child is hot and purple as a fig;
It is my only child, and I am old.
Oh, save it!
Callirrhoë I am ready.
[*Enter Demophilè*].
1st Cit. What a face!
Sickness and hurry do alternately
Pinch and dilate its features. Let her pass.
Here, woman, drop beneath my arm, just so!
What news?
Demophile. None, none . . . Oh, stop! for I am come
To die, d'ye hear; to die instead of her.
Dear heart! she's never had upon her skin
Aught red but sticky bits o' sycamore—
That she should have it dabbled with her blood!
Machaon. 'Tis the wet nurse!
Callirrhoë. It shall not be. Your milk
Feeds the weak human grafts, the stranger shoots
They put within your bosom. Mine's a fountain
Which never hath received within its basin
That it was formed to hold. Demophile,

You taught me first to walk, and now good nurse,
You'll see how nicely I can walk to death.

Demophile. Her blood, her blood! [*Faints.*

Callirrhoë. This hand hath often held my clothes for me.
It must not hold them now. You do no service,
Poor kindly fingers—loose.

Machaon. Your eyes are tearful.

Callirrhoë. It is giddiness.

Machaon. You stooped.

Callirrhoë. I'm straight. They crush me?

Machaon. Off! stand off!

Acephalus. The priest, where is the priest?

Callirrhoë. He keeps me waiting!

Machaon. Brute!

Callirrhoë. Comfort my brother.
I used to nurse him when he cried. Machaon,
Comfort him; he hath need.

Machaon. 'Twere better far
Blister the inflammation of his terror
Than pacify with lenatives. Nay, nay!
I'll do it for your sake, Callirrhoë.

Cleitophon. Hail, my dear kinswoman, so glorified of the gods, so honoured in death, so dignified as a patriot, so sanctified as a mortal, so beatified as a maid!

[*Enter Promeneia among the crowd.*]

Promeneia. I'm sick and full of pain; a fever runs
Beneath my skin that's dried upon my veins
Stiff as a bat's wing; and my eyes—they feel

To bubble in the burning caldrons
O' the sockets. I'm o'er tired ; and yet, be brave,
Old sinews ! I will beat ye on no more
When I have seen Emathion. His sister !
I thought she'd all the graces o' the world
To be his sister.

1st Cit. By my word o' faith,
This is a cruel waiting.

2nd Cit. She looks sick.
He's never kept a beast so long.

[*Enter Emathion, creeping behind the crowd.*

Promeneia. 'Tis he !
How like a god he looks !
Emathion, I am here.

Emathion. Oh, horror, horror !

Woman. Why don't her brother die ? [*To the child.*
Hush-a-hush !
Mother will blow on thy hot little head.
Curse the slow priest ! [*Exit Emath.*

1st Cit. Well said, dame. Let's haul up her brother to the altar. We must pull him as an ox, for he will walk not as a man.

Promeneia. You want to kill Emathion ? Kill me !
'Tis all the same, because of love !

1st Cit. Ho ! ho !

2nd Cit. Ha ! ha !

3rd Cit. Just listen ! An' he wants to live
To fondle her !—the beautiful Emathion !
Would marble mate with dung ?

1st Cit. 'Tis a strange world!

2nd Cit. Well, we must give him up; but we'll not speak with him henceforth—only hoot at him, mock, howl, gibber, jeer, and execrate till his flesh shall be sore with shame, as a bull's hide with gad flies. [*To Prom.*] Come, you said you'd die.

Promeneia. For him. I will not move a step for her.—
With agony my gums butt at each other.
I cannot stand.—Die you for her. She's nothing.

2nd Cit. Come on!

Promeneia. I will not die, I will not die! Oh! oh!
[*Falls.*

2nd Cit. A case of plague!

1st Cit. Away! We're pressed on her.

3rd Cit. Let us be gone.

1st Cit. The priest! He comes at last;
He'll stop infection! [*Enter Coresus.*

[*Pointing to Callirrhoë*] See, her pallor's red
As painted ivory of a goddess' cheek.

2nd Cit. But the brown priest is pale.

Promeneia. Lonely and dying! Hateful death, to steal
This weight of love away from my lock'd heart.
Old chests are strong!
You shall not; for I'll fight your each essay
To turn the key! And, oh, it is a fight
Tears me to shreds!

Coresus [*to Callirrhoë*]. And will none die for you?
Have you no lover?

Callirrhoë. For my people, I
Come joyfully to die; each breath I draw
Delays deliv'rance; choose where thou wilt strike.
Coresus. It is the heart hath sinned. Bare the right breast. [*Aside.*
Oh, lovely, snowy summit to the rock
Of her hard heart!—Come near. Behold, ye people,
This maiden-victim. Ye have sorely sinned,
And so hath she, more deeply than you all.
Your sins and hers are blacker than the soles
Of a slave's feet, more vile. Then wonder not
Heav'n sent this hungry-jawed voracious plague,
This tiger of its wrath, to tear your flesh
With teeth of maddening pangs.
Promeneia. Oh! oh!
Coresus. Ye hear the cries
That mark its savage feast. Repent! repent!
[*Emathion glides behind Promeneia, who seizes him by the foot.*
Promeneia. Emathion, water! My tongue's leather!
For you I'd drain the well o' my body. A little water!
Emathion. There's for your thirst, and curse you!
[*Strikes her dead with a blow on the temple.*
They'll have me; they're after me. I'm the pole to a tent of horror. It's all round me.
[*Exit running.*
Callirrhoë [*aside*]. My brother!
Has he repented? Does he come at last?
Gone, gone!

Coresus. Impenitence is man's foolhardiness
Toward God.
Citizens. We do confess the Bromian;
Have mercy, Dionysus!
Callirrhoë. And forgive.
[*Coresus turns and looks at her.*
Coresus. Behold, great god, this people's humbled mind,
Forgive, and on their sacrifice be pleased
To look with favour. They will worship thee
As I have worshipped. They will drink thy wine
As I have drunk; will know and prophesy.
[*Aside.*] Oh, I unanchor—I must die—leave *her.*
[*Aloud.*] Callirrhoë, you are ready?
Callirrhoë. Yes.
Coresus [*raising the knife*]. Accept
The sacrifice!
My god, my god! she's white as holy milk
They pour on other altars; thine must have
Wine. I am dark, and liker wine than she.
I'll keep thy ritual! Behold, I pour!
[*Stabs himself.*
1st Cit. He struck wrong, see!—the priest!
2nd Cit. He struck himself.
3rd Cit. Yes, yes; he'll bleed to death, dry up the stream
Of blood; tis from his heart.
Callirrhoë. Nay, touch him not,
I am his Mænad, *I* alone believe;

Go quickly to your homes; the god accepts
The sacrifice. Cry Io for the god!

Citizens. Io! Io! Io!

Callirrhoë. He heard the cry, Coresus, your great priest.
A rapture crossed him. Now he hears no more.
I may a little praise him. Calydon,
Bear in your heart your high deliverer.
Swear ye will live no more to common ends
Of food and toil and habit. Swear that here
In condemnation of your petty lives
There shall be mighty passions solemnized
By masque and chorus, that all men may learn
The wealth of such emotion as empowers
To deed like this. All hail, Coresus, hail!

Citizens. We swear.
All hail, Coresus, our deliverer!

Callirrhoë. Now go home.
Go all of you, and see how fare the sick.

1*st Cit.* Let's see if they are mended.

2*nd Cit.* Run, run home.

3*rd Cit.* We'll go. Perchance the sick who died last night,
Will presently recover.

1*st Cit.* Ay, we'll see.

2*nd Cit.* And do you think my wife will live again?

1*st Cit.* Who knows!

Woman. Oh! the child's cooler.

All. Dionysus, hail! [*Exeunt.*

[*Machaon goes up and looks at the corpse.*]

Callirrhoë. No hope to staunch that blood. Machaon, seek
Dione, tell her that I come to her
In the deep woods. Oh, tell her—break it soft—
The Mænads have no priest. [*Exit Machaon.*
Ah me! ah me!
How thou did'st ope thine eyes wide at the shout;
And I looked down on thee and drank thy love.
I am a Mænad; I must have love's wine,
Coresus, and you die before my face,
Leaving me here to thirst. I dare not mar
Thy holy death, mixing my fruitless blood
With this most precious, sacrificial stream.
Thine be this day's full glory. Oh, my dead, [*taking the*
Thus I despoil thee! *knife*]
[*Exit.*

[*Enter Emathion, creeping round the pillars; advances to Promeneia's body.*]

Emathion. Hath she moved? Oh! she looks but a heap of wrinkled marl! I thought not a corpse was so like soil. I had it in my mind to kiss her; but she's so earthy, she'd crumble into my lips and choke me! I meant but to say, "Be quiet"—no more; but she took it so seriously. She's too brown! But my sister is white. 'Twill be fair to see. [*Advances to Coresus' body.*] What! Brown too—but smooth as clay? Brown, and it looks not like her. I'm going mad, going mad; for it looks brown and strange. Oh! I'm mad; for my sister looks not like my sister, and I'm her brother and should know;

and I say it's not she, which proves me mad. Oh! I am mad, mad, mad! [*Re-enter Citizens.*

1st Cit. Who's this wolf that smells the dead?

2nd Cit. Stone him off! 'Tis her brother!

3rd Cit. The coward!

1st Cit. Clap him, clap him; he's the hero of the day.

Emathion [*with a warning movement of his hand*]. Plague! Plague! Plague! Plague! Plague!

[*Exit.*

1st Cit. He says "Plague!" Perchance the god hath shut it up in him.

2nd Cit. Well, I'm for Bacchus.

3rd Cit. The knife's gone.

1st Cit. Oh, he's ta'en it.

3rd Cit. He'd best use it! Death would be better than life now, if you'd give him the scales to weigh 'em.

1st Cit. O noble priest!

2nd Cit. O brave deliverer!

[*Exeunt with the body of Coresus.*

3rd Cit. [*re-entering*]. We'd best burn the old stranger. No fear to touch her now. What's this on her finger? Hair!—a strange ring, i' faith! I know nothing about her. [*Exit with the body of Promeneia.*

SCENE VI.—*A Plot of Grass in a Wood.*

[*Faun dancing and singing*].

Faun I dance and dance! Another faun,
A black one, dances on the lawn,
He moves with me, and when I lift
My heels, his feet directly shift.
I can't out-dance him, though I try;
He dances nimbler than I.
I toss my head, and so does he;
What tricks he dares to play on me!
I touch the ivy in my hair;
Ivy he has and finger there.
The spiteful thing to mock me so!
I will outdance him! Ho! ho! ho!

Machaon [*behind the trees*]. A sight to shake the stiffest sides on earth!
'Twould force a misanthorpe to hang a smile
Upon his lip, as dew-drop on a thorn.
Plutus beholding this would fill with noise
Of laughter all the hollow of his voice,
So exquisitely laughable it is.
'Tis one of nature's jokes she's mistress of.
The little fool
Tries to outcaper his own shadow. Ha!
With what a pettish energy he springs,
His forelock nodding to his sportive heels.
Thus man toils oft for the Impossible

With earnest foolishness and sorry end.
But here's a jocund close to hopeless toil!
He's lying all a-grin because he lies
Upon his shadow, which he reckons caught.
Ha! ha! The very sediments of mirth
Are stirred throughout my nature. This gay knave
I'll question. [*Parting the trees.*
Faun. Ha! ha! ha!
Machaon. What have you caught?
Something philosophers themselves can't seize
With all their definitions. We'll revere
One who has caught himself, and at his feet
Sit like small scholars. [*Faun offers to run away.*
Nay, you shall not go.
I'll make you talk first. You're a funny thing!
Faun. Oh, let me go! I'll bite! Oh, let me go!
Machaon. A natural philosopher, I see,
Apt with his mouth. I want to hear you talk.
For lies you are not keen enough. Methinks
The innocence of truth hath never fled
This simple mouth, though like a nested bird
It soon gets feathers, and betakes itself
Even from infant lips. Come, sit you down.
Faun. No! no!
Machaon. Down with you. Why, you're on the shade
That danced with you. He's under you! Sit firm!
There's my good knave; you see I mean no harm;
And when you've told me all I want to hear,

Then dance away within the sun again!

Faun. I will not dance.

Machaon. No sulks, I'll have no sulks.
Come, tell me what you are, whether a boy
Or but a boyish creature.

Faun. I'm a faun.

Machaon. And what is that?

Faun. Why, 'tis a faun!

Machaon. Just so.
But then you're not a boy?

Faun. I am a faun.

Machaon. His slow conception blocks my questions up.
Well, can you tell me how you were begot?
Dropt from the womb of Nature, I should say;
Or had you once a mother?

Faun. I'm a faun.

Machaon. A truism, my rustic sage! But how
Did you become a faun?—I'll try plain phrase.—
Cannot you tell
Aught of your childhood,—of the time, I mean,
When you were smaller?

Faun. Oh, I danced as now,
And crushed the acorn-cups, and ran the deer,
Sucked the ripe mulberries, tossed the chestnuts up,
As I do now, and . . .

Machaon. Yes, I understand.
—O Eloquence, the tongue of Love, appeal
To cherished memories of simple things,
And thou art on the silliest of lips

That never move to reason !—Then you've lived
Your life in woods ; or is this very wood
Its one green limit ?

Faun. Once I found the trees
Grow few, so few, like hyacinths in June,
Which made me very sorry ; then, I saw
Grass without any shade on which I ran.
But then did I grow frightened, for I'm sure
The shade cares for me, and will keep me safe.
And I ran back.

Machaon. Poor little fool ! I shrink
Thus from a new aspect of life, before
Unknown. I cannot run away, like you,
To shades of ignorance to hide amaze.
Have you got any human qualities ?
Speak, are you quite inhuman ?

Faun. I'm a faun.

Machaon.—Like all the world, he doth repeat himself,
Making an adage stuff the holes of thought.
Yet I'm too rough, through grief's ill-timed assault.—
You dance and talk, both actions of the man,
And yet there's something in you I can't fit
Into humanity. I can't tell what.

Faun [*offering to jump up*]. Now I may go !

Machaon. Stop ! Tell me, can you love ?

Faun. I love Coresus.

Machaon. Ah ! and you love him !
What do you know of him ?

Faun. He's kind to me.

Machaon. The knowledge of a brute. I hoped for more.
What! from this simpleton.—He loved your wood?

Faun. He loves it, and he often plays with me, . . .

Machaon. How dull are the unfearing to suspect!

Faun. And bends the bough of the high fir for reach
Of my hand wanting cones, and then he strokes
The smooth back of a deer, and binds its neck
With ivy-leaves, at which, oh, how I laugh!
And then he laughs, and then I clap my hands.

Machaon. Hast thou seen any in the woods to-day?

Faun. Two, with their noses on a mossy root,
That looked at me, and . . .

Machaon. I meant any man.
Hast thou seen man or maiden in these glades?

Faun. No! no! He has not come so long a time.
When will he come again?

Machaon. No more, no more.
—I'd better spell the manuscript of Death
To these untutored ears. This ignorance
So blessèd in the present may afflict
The future, with its wonder unallayed,
That growing drearily, at last becomes
The brutish misery that never knows.
—He's dead.

Faun. Does that mean that he's angry with me?
Oh, I'll be good,
If he will come again, and not be *dead!*

Machaon.—He'll melt my manhood! It is strange
most strange;

The tongue of knowledge wags with sounding phrase :
Set ignorance to question, and it straight
Declines to lisping. I am childish-mouthed
Before this unschooled creature.—Come to me.
You will not? Nay, but I must have you near
If I'm to tell you what we mean by *dead.*
—I make too solemn preparations,
(Oh, cruel priestcraft of my tender dread!)
He's frightened. Brevity but cuts the flesh
Of our anxieties; prolixity
Tears it. So I'll be brief.—
You said that you were sorry when in June
The hyacinths drop away?
Faun. Yes.
Machaon. When they're gone.
You cannot get them back again?
Faun. I can.
Not for a while, but then their streaky buds
Shoot up, and soon they're all with me again.
Machaon.—Ah! I must give a better rendering
From Death's old bone-grey parchment.—Right, you're right!
The hyacinths blue the ground spring after spring,
Although with different flowers from those you bunched
In grasp too small last year. For oft your hands
Are greedy with the flowers?
Faun. No, for they look
Long-faced and tired, and do not smile at me
As when they stick straight up out of the ground.

Machaon.—A thread to guide me, through the labyrinth
Of his simplicity and ignorance,
To the mid-chamber, dark and windowless,
Where understanding lies!—The tired flowers
Grow ugly, lose
All likeness to the bells you jerked about
So merrily when they were purple?
Faun. Yes.
When they grow tired, I lay them on the grass;
I love to lie upon the grass when tired,
And then they go.
Machaon. That going I call Death.
Faun. But then they come again, quite fresh and gay.
But I am tired, tired, tired!
Machaon—The thread is snapt, the labyrinthine way
Blocked up with dulness.—Yet you want to know
Wherefore Coresus cannot play with you?
Faun. Oh yes!
Machaon. Then tell me, did you ever love
One deer above the rest?
Faun. Oh yes!
Machaon. —His yawn
Is to my heart's pain most medicinal.
Tire often blunts the edge of sorrow's sword.—
And did it ever cease to follow you?
Faun. One day it followed; then lay down; then up
It got, and followed as I ran before.
At last it lay, and would not stir, for all

I tickled its soft skin with chestnut-leaves.
It lay, and . . .
Machaon. It was *dead!*
Faun [*shuddering*]. It grew a heap
More nasty than an ant-hill, for it smelt!
Machaon. He knows the alphabet of Death; my task
To make the grim idea creep through the signs
As snake through blades of grass. Yes, I must form
The sentence of man's doom, and teach to him.
Faun. I hate the wood about it; never dance,
Or even go there.
Machaon. It was *dead.*
Faun. Perhaps
It's right again; I never go to see.
Machaon. I tell you it was *dead.*
Faun. Then it *was* dead.
Machaon.—How shall I lift the lid of his mind's chest,
And empty it of Hope's sweet silver form
That's been its tenant and glad prisoner?—
Coresus thus is dead:
Just like your deer; dead, dead, just like your deer.
—He's all a-tremble; yet his frightened thought
Still dares a vain resistance, like a girl
Who whips the captor's arms. Ah me, ah me!
I dare not comfort him while still he doubts;
Silence is unbelief's best battle-field.—
Faun [*in a whisper*]. And is he brown and nasty, like
the deer?
Machaon.—I can't pollute his memory with *Yes!*—

No, no. But he can talk no more, nor move,
Nor ever come to play with you again.
Faun. He'll come with the next hyacinths?
Machaon. No, no!
You never, never will be with him more,
Or play with him again.
Faun. Oh—o—h—h!
Machaon. Belief
At last fills up the doorway of his doubt.—
My boy!—A sob is coming, and the face
Looks older now its lines of joy are bent
To sorrow's converse will.—
[*Faun rolls on the grass and sobs.*
Nay, do not cry.
Look, here's a cone. I'll pick you cones, and play.
—O Death, how, like a cruel step-mother,
You always put your spite in every joy!
You've torn a great hole in the happiness
Of this quite happy creature, which no stitch
Of Time will mend completely.
Faun. Dead, dead, dead!
Coresus, don't be dead!
Machaon. I've got a cone;
I'll give it you. There! Try to love me, boy!
Faun. Coresus dead! Oh, oh! Dead like the deer.
The horrid deer that lay and smelt! Oh, oh!
Coresus, dead like that?
Machaon. You'll love me?
Faun. No.

Perhaps the deer's all right ! I'll see ! I'll see !
For then Coresus will be all right too ! [*Exit.*

Machaon. Go, have thy foolish way. Thy tears are dry;
I will not raise their flood-gate for the world.
Deception is the ivy of the mind :
I've cut
Its roots at his small brain, and it may hang
Greenly about it for a little while
Before it withers. I must budge, must hence.
Poor youngster ! Here's the very place his back
Made in the moss. Would he could lie and laugh
The shadow o' Death uncaught ! So Truth can curse :
I thought not it could put its sacred tongue
To such a use. Heigh-ho ! From this time forth
He'll have a different laugh. I must be gone ! [*Exit.*

SCENE VII.—*The Market Place in Calydon. Megillus and Acephalus meeting.*

Megillus. Good-day, these better times.

Acephalus. Better times do you call them ?—when the pyre-flames have threshed out our hopes, and left us but a chaff of cinders, whence the grain is gone to fatten Death. Better times, you say ?

Megillus. Beshrew they are ! We've apples, till the apple-trees look as if they were the work of Dædalus, that cunning worker in bronze ! Pears ! Why they are worthy to be ear-drops unto Cybele; and so numerous

are they, she might change her ornaments a second. Many fruits, and few mouths. I would not wish to live in better times.

Acephalus. You might have borne no fruit yourself, in that you decline so to pears and apples.

Megillus. Forsooth, neighbour, the honey of prosperity will soon correct thy sourness. Look you! The town is clean. Yester-night the fiery teeth of Death consumed, save one, their latest corpse. In youth I never snuffed the air with keener enjoyment, nor knew it of so sweet a quality. Thanks to the great god, whose devout worshipper will I ever be!

Acephalus. And yet, Megillus, I'm an unbarbed arrow, with no children to carry me into the future.

Megillus. Pooh, man! To drive you through a body, and make you the parent of murder, rather than direct you to the bull's eye of your expectations. Our children sow not in our hopes; rather they take the spade and dig them up.

Acephalus. They may turn them o'er first; but in the end they fail not to throw the seed by twos or hundreds. I hold not with you; but you only had a girl!

Megillus. Leave we this. To-night they burn the priest who killed himself to 'scape killing a comely woman.

Acephalus. He did it in a fit.

Megillus. A most likely condition for so mad a deed.

Acephalus. Let us move on. Here comes a crowd.

[*Enter Emathion followed by citizens.*]

Megillus. On my faith, this is Emathion. I'll have a word with him.—How do you, Runaway?

Emathion. I shall roll, and tear up the ground; and I shall become all over like yellow clay. But don't mistake. I haven't got the plague! Pray you, do not go away from me, for no one's at home. I can't think where all are gone. Oh no, I haven't got the plague! You're running away!

Acephalus. Nay, only you do that.

Emathion [*pointing at a woman*]. She's there! Plague take her. Look! Did you ever see such a flat mouth! Was it made to swallow water, like a fish's? And she's trying to puff it forward for a kiss. Heaven help me!

Woman. Why should the young man insult me? I swear I'm not for kissing him, as he impudently asserts.

Emathion. I only struck as you might pat a horse—so, so, so! She's there! Water, water, water! Mark her! She's the locust o' my flower of life. So I pinched her—very gently;—so! And I got the plague; and they're all running after. What an eye she's got! When 'twas on the ground 'twas a glow-worm. You think me mad, but I know it's she. There's her one tooth, like a yellow stalactite hanging from the cave o' the face!

1st Citizen. He's lunatic. Young fellow, you need not mow at him; he's senseless to your faces, and methinks it's blasphemous.

2nd Citizen. Just look how he stares at yon olive-tree! It might be a grey ghost from his desperate countenance.

Emathion. Listen there! Hark! It's in the trees! They're moving! See! and they say she must die! Hark! It's quite clear now. Oh, the cursèd trees! And they will cut her throat. Oh, no, no, no, no! They'll cut mine! They've got hold on me. Good people, I've the plague!

Megillus. He raves of the oracle I should say.

Emathion. It's all about my ears; it's in the trees; it says that she must die. Again! But I'll not hear it! Yet the wind's everywhere! and they want to make me die!

1*st Citizen.* They drove him from the palæstra with hoots and mouthings. He cried as if he were a child again, till the breeze got up; and then he fell into a frenzy such as you behold.

Emathion. I'll fly to the Libyan desert, for there are no trees! To the desert! To the desert, before I've got the plague! I hope the people won't run after me—the wind would flap their clothes! To the desert! To the desert, where there are no trees!

[*Emathion and citizens exeunt.*

Acephalus. Where are his kin, that he wanders thus at large?

Megillus. They say his eyes like sullen comets shoot menace at Cleitophon, and the old man hides from their malignity. Of his sister naught is known. She was not found at home, and the doctor Machaon is missed. Whoever would sail safely over this mystery, let him plumb it first. The young man was comely.

But his beauty is the mere skull of itself; and I'll swear I saw grey hairs on his uncombed head.

Acephalus. Beauty is a stuff the moths of ill soon fray. They eat it ravenously, and leave it shameful rags. Why, my boy lay on the bed with the tatters of beauty hanging all about his face; his mother screamed at him. And he did not deserve it as doth this madman. Oh, misery lays its eggs in loveliness. Itself eats, and bequeaths the remainder to its progeny—waste and decay, and wrinkles, and grey hair. Faith, Megillus, they be mighty big waves that capsize the mind; for billows have gone over mine, and yet it is afloat.

Megillus. The boat sinks sooner than the vessel. There is the danger of these small minds; over they tilt on a sudden. But ours are better built than such small craft.

Acephalus. Thine is a tough piece of shipwright's work. A sea of affliction would not affect its sailing. I'll home. Good-day, these better times. Munch your apples, and look at your daughter's urn. 'T will give you an appetite. [*Exit.*

Megillus. That man's gall is spilt all over his body. The day's still early, and the air is sweet as the breath of Europa's bull. I'll walk on with its fresh companionship. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.—*A Wood. Enter Callirrhoë, hiding some thing in her robe.*

Callirrhoë. Alone at last; deep in the shady hills,
The dark heights I have yearned for. Far below
A pyre is burning. Leap, ye glowing flames,
Leap up to me! Coresus, it avails
Nothing to heap thee with my proffered love.
Do we lay food and wine about the dead,
When the stiff lips are barred, to make amends
For past refusal to the trembling mouth?
Had I done evil deeds, I might atone;
The gods are gracious, and make clean from guilt.
But simply to have lived my summer through
And borne no roses! Nothing compensates
For dearth, for failure, when the season's past.
Ah me, ah me! and he besought my love
As wildly, passionately, as the dead
Beseech their burial. My heart aches with tears.
What do I see? Far down that alley'd green
Glimmers the statue of a human form;
Immovable it sits.
The aspect is Machaon's; yet I scarce
Dare give him speech, so inaccessible
He looks; aloof in spirit, like a god
Hardened against his suppliants
Machaon (*to himself*). The plague
Had spent itself; I clearly marked its course,

Tracked and predicted the returning health,
Dependent on no priestly sacrifice.
And yet what glory rested on the girl
Who could put life by for her people's peace.
And when he lay—Coresus—at her feet:—
I have watched many death-beds, seen where Death
Was the chief ministrant about the face,
Washing, and laying out the spirit's corse;—
With him it was quite otherwise; life there
Laid death to rest. It was rare dying, that!
Life uppermost at end of the hard strife;
Death forced to terms in the ensuing peace
Involving full subjection. I have brought
Word to Dione of that death. Poor child,
I think she loved him; when I said he died
To save Callirrhoë, she grew as white
As the white sheep-skin of her nebris-fringe,
And cried, "She was not worthy of his love;
She never loved him!"

Callirrhoë. False, false; oh! she lied
And bore true witness to me all in one.
I never loved him, *never.*
Confession is the bitterest penalty
When wrongèd Love is plaintiff. I confess;
With this addition, that I love him now
With woman's rapture, when the man she loves
Is god for adoration. I am come
Humbly to supplicate I may receive
Initiation in the Bacchic rites,

And die his Mænad.

Machaon. It would please him best
You should declare allegiance to the god,
And make all Calydon subservient
To the strange worship. Men acclimatize
To new emotion rapidly ; it takes
Time to develop custom. Clear the truth
By uproar of the Asiatic band
Concealed, and overclamoured.

Callirrhoë. You discern
There is a truth ?

Machaon. Rather a mystery
I would unravel. I have looked abroad,
And learnt to use life deftly as a tool
Keen-edged to execute my purposes.
I had no pleasure ; I just won my ends,
Toiled and was served ; there was no music born.
Whereas these Mænads, eager as hot Pan,
Catch up all life as the peculiar reed
To make sweet passage for their spirit's breath ;
And Nature leaves her shyness, shows her mind,
This sullen Nature, laughing in my face,
Like an idiot, his imbecility
Made resonant
By shrieking echo from the void within.
Deep in the forest here, I found a faun
Coresus loved ; I captured him, and tried
To tame his wildness ; he would none of me,
Was stubborn, restive ; when I made him feel

His master could not come to him again,
The creature blanched and shivered, and fled scared,
As though the news were mortal.

Callirrhoë. Can it be!
A little, wizen body lies along
Yon root o' hazel; and a powdery heap
Of bones is close about; the hand still grips
A horny cone that purple-patches it.

Machaon. Oh, bring me there! He went to the dead deer.

[*They come to the hazel.*]

'Tis he; and Death is spread all over him,
Death that looks startled at itself, as if
It had mis-settled, falling on a prey
Unnatural to its appetite. Ah me!
How brutal, coarse, and ignorant I stand
Beside this sweet stray in humanity;
A thing so passionately gay, it seemed
The fresh, warm juice that fills the hyacinth,
And pulses sudden verdure through the pines,
Leapt in his veins; the laughter of the spring
Flowed through him; Nature's vehemence and Youth's
Met in his rapture. Now I see him wear
Death's hoary aspect, shrunken and defaced,
The youth o' the world is gone.

Callirrhoë. You say he loved
Coresus. I have never looked on one
Who loved him, and I never loved him—Oh!
Dione, you shall yet efface that word!

Machaon. Here is another sacrifice. For me,
I taught this boy mortality, an art
Of which he was most innocent.
Callirrhoë. Machaon, it is natural to die
Wherever love is; and Coresus gave
To this poor faun the faculty of love
That stirs the mortal craving. Be content!
Machaon. Coresus killed him!
Callirrhoë. If you'd have it so.
Machaon. Better a plagueful of the city dead
Than this strange life miscarried; 'tis as if
A part of Nature were herself extinct.
Coresus cursed all Calydon; here, here,
Machaon, is thy work!
Callirrhoë. Most surely here,
Where Love hath made the great discovery
Of Death, a grey coast she must civilize.
Machaon. Oh, never, never can man carry there
The Hestian flames; ne'er in the mother-shores
Of our humanity include that realm.
Callirrhoë. Who dwell but with themselves grow impotent:
They have no Past; the Past is what hath been
Other than now; the Future is a guest
Comes not to them
Who will admit no novel influence.
Such can but iterate themselves. It needs
Heaven to transmute our days to yesterdays,
And touch our morrows with the mystery

Of hope; when men remembered and desired,
Straightway they worshippèd. Machaon, be
The priest of Dionysus.

Machaon. You forget;
They would reject me, mindful of my scoffs.

Callirrhoë. I know a way to win obedience.
Go quickly; gather the great scattered band.
I will await you; but the oath is sworn.

Machaon. I would not leave that little corpse, except
To learn the secret how he came to die.
I am Machaon, and still curious. [*Exit.*

Callirrhoë. Dead of Coresus' love, poor little one;
Dead, dead for him? And he but stroked thy head,
And showed thee kindness; while for me, oh, see!
I bring this from him.

[*Stabs herself with the sacrificial knife.*

We will both be dead,
Dead with Coresus! [*Dies.*

[*Re-enter Machaon with Dione.*]

Machaon. Dione, come to her; look not so hard.
She was the stillest girl in Calydon,
Shy, and a little proud; be pitiful.

[*Discovering Callirrhoë's body.*

Fool that I was to leave her to herself,
And not divine she bound me to that oath,
To steal to her Coresus! Oh, my boy,
Thou dost not lie so orphanlike; 'tis well.

Mænads (*within*). Swiftly, ye Mænads, come to see
this girl

Who brought the curse on Calydon ; leap down
The rocks, encompass her !
1st Mænad. Yonder's his pyre !
That mounting flame ! She lit it ; murder her !
Machaon. Shriek on ; the quiet of the dead is safe
As a babe's innocence.
2nd Mænad. She is our prey.
Machaon. A heap of leaves will shroud
Safe from espial any woodland thing. [*Covers faun.*
Fair vot'ries of the civilizing god,
What delicate urbanity ye need !
Dione !
Dione. He was our deliverer.
See, there ! From that high ridge above the pyre,
A flitting form—no bat's wing !—there again
A Mænad tightens round her neck the coils
Of a live serpent, pressing in the fangs
Fiercely her finger-tips ;—these will not live
Without Coresus.
Machaon. Bare her corpse and speak.
For me, I'll watch them till the fever falls—
I have great patience with delirium. [*Hides.*

[*Enter Mænads.*]

Dione. This is a Mænad, see !
1st Mænad. Her hair is tressed.
This face hath known no workings of the god ;
It is an unsacked city. Ye are fools,
Duped by a stolen nebris.
Dione. She came here

To join our company ; she would not die
Till she had owned the Bromian, and bound
One who was witness of the sacrifice,
A mighty novice, to proclaim the king.

2nd Mænad. Where is he? Where? All men have mocked at us.

We have come back half-murdered from the town,
Coresus hath forsaken us; he thought
No more of the barbarian women when
The Greek's white bosom glistened Woe to us!
Far are our homes across the sea, our priest
Is slain. Woe, woe! Our god delivers not.

Machaon [*advancing*]. Most mightily he succours. Shame on ye,
Doubting your great divinity, the while
Cursed Calydon breathes the young spring-tide air.
I saw Coresus die; your great priest fell,
As Semele sank glowing with the god;
Life flooded him; he was immersed in life.
The power
That draws the white milk bubbling to your mouths
From the hard scaurs, brake out munificent
From kindled lips: this girl stayed not to weep,
Stooped not to kiss her lover; she stood up
Pleading, inspired, prophetic, eloquent,
Inciting the great multitude to praise
The city's saviour and Coresus dead.

1st Mænad. She is a Mænad; she is one of us!

Machaon. She would not slay herself where the great life

Had been laid down, though passionate to die.
She came here to the woods, and finding me,
Bound me to be your leader. Solemnly
I swore to bear true witness to the deeds
I had beheld. Believe me, I have looked,
Looked deep into your secret things, and own
The rustic deity who pressed the grape
A god that makes humanity august,
Fulfilling it with mystery and joy.

Mænads. We take you, we accept you as our priest.

Dione. The holy ritual . . .

Machaon. Shall be observed.

If man need god as his ideal self,
He needs the picture of his life sublimed ;
And we will put
Before men's eyes the picture of high deeds,
Their hearts will emulate. They shall see acts
Like hers, who poured her unpolluted life
A frank libation ; shall again behold
Coresus, with the sacrificial knife,
And how he sheathed it. We will praise the god
By sculpture of the deeds he hath inspired ;
Yet not in fixity, for you shall track
Each passion from its quick'ning to its pyre ;—
Desires that momently disclose themselves,
In chasmic shock, as the Symplegades
Rift to the Euxine, must be held apart,
As by Athene's cleaving arms, access
Forced to the inmost heart. In you I see

Human emotion, action in the rough;
Your agitated gestures shall become
Rhythmic in tidal refluence, your hoarse shrieks
Sonorous intonations. Ye shall dance
And thunder in your mighty mountain hymns,
While I recount
The Evian conflicts, victories, and ye,
With glorious inroad of irruptive praise,
In chorus shall conclude the chronicle.
Do ye accept the doom, ye Bacchanals?

Mænads. Take us, your garland-bearing company,
Adown the heights; their echoes shall resound
With flute and timbrel, and triumphant shout.

Machaon. Soon as the sunrise vexes your closed eyes,
Spring from your coverts; rouse the sisterhood,
And, parting into ordered ranks your band,
Assemble here, that we, in solemn train,
May bear this maiden down the wooded steeps
Of Calydon for burial.

Dione. The faun?

Machaon. Hush, hush!
I'll bury him at day-break in the wood
While the dew keeps all quiet. Now, begone.

[*Exeunt Dione and Mænads.*

The white troops through the moonlight steal away;
The last pale nebris glimmers on the hills.
Now can I bare myself
To the white skin o' my spirit unto thee,
Great Evius!—finding not the wherewithal

To worship by the altar, but in life.
As I am Bacchanal, I will relax
No effort till mankind be broken in
By discipline of pleasure to true want
In commerce and in dream.—There is a stir
I' the heap of leaves. A few more silver hours,
And I must put them both away from me;—
Callirrhoë
Must go to her Coresus; and the boy—
I'll lay him in the sunny grass-plot, where
No other faun shall vex him with its dance.

FAIR ROSAMUND.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HENRY, *King of England.*
WILFRED DE LACY, *a knight.*
JOSE DE LACY, *brother to Wilfred.*
SIR TOPAZ, *an old knight.*
MAVIS, *an architect.*
MICHAEL, *Keeper of the King's forest.*

ELINOR, *Queen of England.*
ROSAMUND, *foster-daughter to Michael.*
MARGERY, *foster-sister to Rosamund.*
BEATRIX, *betrothed to Wilfred.*
ELLEN GREENE, *a witch.*
Masons, Courtiers.

SCENE.—*At Woodstock and London.*

PROLOGUE.

CHORUS.

As toiling Hercules forced Hell's grim door,
And viewed the nether mysteries of fate;
So doth the buskin'd Muse of tragic lore
Burst through the ancient adamantine gate
That gives to night the secrets of the past.
Listen! She opens rounded mouth to tell
A thing, unguessed before—revealed at last.
She whom our first Plantagenet too well
Loved, and for whom he built the marble maze,
Was no rich crimson beauty of old line,
As fabled in proud histories and lays;
No Clifford, as 'tis boasted; but, in fine,
A girl o' the country, delicately made
Of blushes and simplicity and pure,
Free ardour, of her sweetness unafraid;
For *Rosa Mundi*—of this truth be sure—
Was nature's Rose, not man's: as ye shall see
In this sad tale of lovers' destiny.

FAIR ROSAMUND.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Woodstock. Masons raising the Labyrinth. Enter at a distance King Henry and Mavis.*

1st Mason. Yonder is the King.
2nd Mason. He's aged of late.
1st Mason. Ay, ay! about the face; his fiery hair
Is dimmed as if by smoke; his hollow eye
Is like a haughty general's retreat.
Yet is he stout in body, well-nigh young.
2nd Mason. Some note he stoops a little i' the back
Since he was whipped in church.
1st Mason. Dare-devil, peace!
He's straight enough; it is the monks that squint.
2nd Mason. Mum, mum!
1st Mason. Why, wherefore?
2nd Mason. 'Cause the sun's come out
That wakens us to labour in the glance
O' Master Mavis' eye.
Mavis. My gracious liege. . . .

King Henry. Thou hast a spider's entrails for thy brain,
To spin me such a web.

Mavis. Upon that Cretan wonder did I think,
That held the misbegotten Minotaur,
Until—so worked my fancy on its shape—
Abortive circles built I airily,
And founded hoary walls as in a dream.
I entered the dim vistas, saw above
The ribboned sky
Blue as the fillets of a troop of girls.
'Twas magic certainty directed me
To the mid-chamber, straight as arrow takes
The eye o' the target; and Conception stood
Above my dreams, their secret throughly solved.

Sir Topaz. I take it, Master Mavis, that you are what they call a genius, for your talk is warm as a summer's day.

Mavis. I spoke too freely. Pardon, gracious sire.
There's many a page within the head our tongue
Should skip as reader.

Sir Topaz. Now I do believe I've touched some quick, and given some unconjecturable pain. On my faith, good fellow, I know not what I have done. My apology is an infant—'tis that innocent.

Mavis. Oh, nothing, sir. 'Twas I that cut myself
With a knife that's in my mouth.

Sir Topaz. Pardy, I'm grieved to the heart if I offended. And 'tis so fair a building—a very rose—you've carved on the ground.

K. Hen. A what?

Sir Topaz. So many curves, circular and broken, I said, sire, the building was in that respect like a rose.

K. Hen. Oh, ay! the garden rose, our cultured rose,
That's folded up in crimson like a queen.
Ay, ay! Then, Master Architect, I'd know
How many days before your labour's close?

Mavis. Five, gracious liege, if every sinew work
From dawn to midnight, spite of curfew's toll
Above the hooded forest; on such terms
Will incompletion yield.

K. Hen. And such we grant,
Though hard upon your craftsmen and yourself;
Necessity is on her knees to us
That we should use ye harshly.

Mavis. Be it so.

Sir Topaz. Ah, ah! He'll be right glad when 'tis finished.

Mavis. No; for my toil hath flushed Time's langui cheek.

K. Hen. I'd have ye mark yon varlets! Make them skip
With energy of blows, and never spare.
Each moment is my prey the dogs should seize;
I will not brook the loss.

Mavis. Your servant, sire
[*Moves towards the masons.*

K. Hen. Sir Topaz. . . .

Sir Topaz. Sire.

K. Hen. I think you never married?

Sir Topaz. Nay. Nor have I within me that which could be quickened into the desire.

K. Hen. *So* proof against the arrow-headed pangs?

Sir Topaz. 'Tis thus. The woman-child died I loved as a lad, and my love never grew after. 'Tis a little thing of her size.

K. Hen. Oh! then you know Love's root as well as flower;

The hidden cords that darkling bind the heart
With hungry vehemence and never loose.
Oh! they may pluck and smell the joyful red
Of golden-scented blossom, call it love;
But there are fibres down, down in the depths,
That never shall be moved, by which it lives.

Sir Topaz. Constancy . . .

K. Hen. I did not speak of that, I spoke of love
When planted in the red soil of the heart;
Of its insatiate girth; of Rosamund,
And how she's everywhere about my soul.
I think I told you once how first we met.
She gathered cherry-blossoms, and I bent
The bough to her; when, lo!—just where they bunched—
Whitest, there hid a little hand more white,
I kissed it, and her upturned face grew white
To swooning, and the breath stood at her lips.
I longed to be a soul from Holy Land,
With shrift won at the Holy Sepulchre;
To touch her flesh made me a penitent;

The pressure of that kissing broke the seal
To all the wine that filled the stony jar
Of my unusèd past. To her I was
No king of men—only the great Lord Love,
To whom she gave, as she were born to it,
Unthinking loyalty. I've never known
Such homage, only sullen tolerance
And darkest-featured hate.

Sir Topaz. My dear liege, you have ever made light of your griefs.

K. Hen. Because I was a loveless man and blind.
Vain, flippant men have tied round Cupid's eyes
The badge of their own shame; his heavenly orbs
See fairest things where others scarce see fair,
Behold in darkness sooty hells more deep.

Sir Topaz. Sire, these words afflict me beyond speech. Is there any service you can put me to, aught you can trust to an old man's care?

K. Hen. Yes, yes; my love, the bright gold of my heart,
Be thou its treasurer,—be that which I
Would give my heart to be.

Sir Topaz. Warden of the labyrinth and guardian of the lady! With joy, and in all fidelity.

K. Hen. 'Tis well; I shall remember. But to give
This charge unto another is as hard
As to pull life and arrow from the breast
Together. Sooth, I am too heavy-souled
That I should stumble 'gainst thy kindliness

With such a clown's heel of ingratitude.
O honest Topaz, as complete my trust
In thee as is my perfect love to her.
Full well I know thou'lt dragon all my wealth,
That none shall be enriched. Yet solitude
May gyve thy days as iron. Will it? Speak.

Sir Topaz. Oh, I'll marry Seclusion for the sake of getting famous progeny—Meditation—Peace.

K. Hen. Why should I ask? Was it a country lass?

Sir Topaz What lass?

K. Hen. She thou didst . . .

Sir Topaz. Ay, ay!

K. Hen. So long ago! and after all at peace!
Come, we must hasten back. Ho, Mavis, there!
Five days!

Mavis. As said, so be it, gracious liege.

SCENE II.—*Woodstock, by the Forester's hut. Enter Rosamund and Margery.*

Mar. 'Tis wonderful to see 'em dance . . .

Ros. And strange
That I may never see an elf, although
I roam at evening underneath the trees,
And love their crumpled gloom.

Mar. Oh, you should see!

Ros. Ah, if I could. What is it in thine eyes?
Why, 'tis their magic black, the naughty hue

Beloved
Of shy hob-goblins.
Mar. You are blue, and safe?
Ros. Safe from enchantment? Yes, or nearly so.
I never see the fairies.
Mar. Secretly
You take that light green path,—I've seen you there,—
An' look behind you; an' I laughed and thought,
"She thinks none sees the elves dance but herself."
I've watched for you as weasel from its hole,
Behind the mossy wall, an' dare not speak,
You came along so new and wonderful.
It must have been the elves.
Ros. Go, Margery;
The fire is low, and father's supper-time!
Mar. He likes you best to wait on him.
Ros. Peace! go!
[*Exit Margery within.*
I'm fretful . . . and my father turned
Once, when we stood together by the door,—
We always settle in the sunset so,
And do not speak,—that night he turned and went
Into the house, as I had not been there.
My heart stood still to hear him . . .
Henry!
The old when lonely must be very lone;
They sit and watch so patient by the fire,
And there is none to come to them save Death.
I'll back directly, for I love him more

Not less, though I'm so hard, with better love,
Bright coin—the king's face shining on it clear—
Not the worn pieces. Yonder is the beech!
I play sometimes when it is very long
Wi' the tiny urns, and say they hold my tears.

[*Exit behind the trees.*

[*Enter Wilfred.*]

Wil. This must be the hut—the nest of sticks where is found the King's dove. Ha, ha! famously said. But I saw him, like a hawk, and his pigeon can't escape. I spied him, and 'twill make my fortune with the Queen. Down in the midst of the trees he toyed with her and kissed her—pat!—as I looked. Ha! ha! I saw but little of that joust of lips, the crimson couples tilted too far off; yet I was witness, and my fortune's made. I'll knock, and use my eyes. [*Knocks.*

[*Enter Margery from within.*]

Fair damsel, pardon me; such sudden light
Is dazzling—

Mar. Please you, enter sir; the sun
Shines as one cannot bear it on the face.
It's dark inside.

Wil. [*aside*]. The blessed simpleton!
What eyes!—to stir one's blood—and shapely cheek,
As brown and red and dimpled as an apple.
We'll have an hour together in the wood.
[*Aloud*] Your father is within?

Mar. He's late to-night.

Wil. Has he a fair young dog?

Mar. Our Blanche has pups.
I play with them.
Wil. No other playfellows?
Mar. What, have you guessed?—the fairies!
Wil. On my soul!
Do you dance with them? Tell me where they break
The ring to let you in to be their queen.
Ay?
Mar. By the beeches.
Wil. Where the old wall lies
Half ruined?
Mar. Yes.
Wil. At this end or at that?
Mar. Right yonder, all among the elders there.
You'd never see 'em. They are very shy,
I fancy. But they like me; so I'd make
A little cap each. Look! I'm sewing it.
This bit o' red. I see you wear red, sir.
Wil. A plume of red, but this is iron mail.
I'll let you handle it.—Ah! who comes here?
Who's that?

[*Re-enter Rosamund.*]

Mar. My sister—and so beautiful,
You'll like to see her.
Wil. Little hypocrite!
You've got too bright an eye to wish it matched.
[*Aside*] Oh! but she's beautiful, and yet withal
Too self-sufficient; one of Nature's prudes,
Who wrap their beauty round them as a cloak,

Nor wave it as a veil. This browner girl
Is Nature's very wanton—will be mine.
[*Aloud*] Good even. Shall I say it is mischance
Compels me speak of business that would be
Of interest to your father, though to you
Indifferent—or Heaven's peculiar grace
That gives me vision of two lovely maids
Who came to choose a setter?—for I've heard
Your father breeds such.

Ros. It is accident.
I'm sorry father's out. Yet since I come
To lay his supper, I can give you hope
You have not journeyed bootless. Sit, sir knight!

Mar [*aside*]. Sir knight!

Wil. Nay, rather kneel—thus.

Ros. Compliments
Are here ill-breeding. We are simple folk,
And I am no court-lady.

Mar. Rosamund!
But very pretty.

Wil. Ladies! Name them not;
There is not one to match you. Why, the heave
Of your green vesture sets desire to think
On the globing water-lilies underneath
Their buds' enthralment; while my city dames
Trick the round swell with gauds and broidery,
Befooling eager gaze—

Ros. I'm maiden, sir,
As well as no court-lady.

Wil. I'll affect
Clownishness, if it please you.—I will watch
Yon forester until I'm churl in full.

[*Enter Michael.*]

Michael. Ay, ay! how now, wench?

Ros. Father! . . .

Wil. [*aside*]. Why, her eyes
Flash to him as the lightning to a stump;
And yet she is the minion of a king!

Mar. He wants a dog.
He's a sir knight.

Mich. Ay, ay! the least of the pups.
He shall not have the brown one with a star.

Wil. Old man, I'd see your dogs—for such you breed,
The country-side allows, as none about.

Mich. Your honour's servant and King Henry's slave.

Wil. 'Tis for the Queen.

Mich. Her humble slave. I've got
Some few behind the hatch.

Wil. I'll come.—You've bred
The fairest daughters of the country-side.

Mich. Oh, ah! the brownie's mine. It was a wench
Like nuts I wedded, an' so full of prayers
I always had my luck. The comely one—
Why, she's my fosterling: her father, sir,
A man-at-arms; her mother! never saw
So fine a woman—just as red and white
As any lady born. I'll ask you, sir,

To step behind. An' girls, for shame, go in!

[*Exeunt Wilfred and Michael.*

Ros. Margery!

Mar. I cannot come. I'll creep
Behind 'em.

Ros. No; it is not maidenly
To be so free with strangers.

Mar. What a man!
With such big, ugly cheeks, like father's bull;
And did you see his great damp curls, an's eyes?
Such eyes that roll about you—

Ros. Margery,
Be quiet! He's a wicked man. Don't speak
About his face.

Mar. He's nasty; but he talks
As kind as can be for a gentleman.

Ros. [*aside*]. O Henry! [*aloud*] They are coming back. We'll go.

[*Exeunt Rosamund and Margery.*

SCENE III.—*Winchester: a room within the Palace. Enter Queen Elinor and the Princes Henry and Richard.*

Queen Elinor. Upon the yellow ground of Africa
Young lions tear each other; so these sons,
Whom I, above all women, in my pride,
May proudly claim my offspring, wage a strife
Each against each. I care not. 'Tis the blood
Insurgent of their equal parentage.

P. Henry [*to Richard*]. Ud's death! Thou wilt defy
me to my face,
Deny my birthright and my crown's right too,
Because, forsooth, we're brothers—you who crawled
Behind me into light, who took the path
Which *I* discovered, in that very act
Sealing yourself my follower—bound to keep
A year's step lower in the court of Time;
You to whose brow no golden circle gave
It's pledge of loyalty; you, you to brag!—
Q. Elin. Urged like my own young monarch.
P. Rich. Glorious fool!
That cannot match a thunderstorm in noise
For all thy clapping lungs! I'll sing you still.
My blood is wine that ran from the same press
As your bright liquor; and the vessel!—see,
I'm broad and tall as you! Ay, mother?
Q. Elin. Yes.
My thumb's nail taller.
P. Rich. Holding so much more
Of the blue juice of royalty. Nay, nay;
Ennoble not your heels—those labourers
O' the soil. It were a shame.
P. Hen. I'll make yours fly.
P. Rich. Why then my knees would stand.
Q. Elin. The lion-heart!
P. Rich. Yea, get me prone, my spirit still would rise
Erect before you, spite of the false show.
Kill me—I'd face you as a spectre tall

With chin that topped your mouth.

Q. Elin. Divinely bold!

P. Rich. I'll never yield in heaven, on earth, in hell.

P. Hen. Thou shalt by everything immovable,
The throne of God and Satan 's iron roof!
I swear thou shalt.

P. Rich. By all that never yields,
The punishment of fiends and sinners' dole,
I swear I never will.

P. Henry. I've sworn.

P. Rich. But I
Swore many days ago. Ha, ha, my oath
Is first-born and the heir of Fate.

Q. Elin. Well put,
My own young warrior.

P. Hen. I'll turn the edge
Of thy own sword against thee, as I live.
In Aquitaine
Bertram de Born, the troubadour, is mad
Beneath thy scorpion rule. I'll use his rage——

P. Rich. Offal!

P. Hen. Then shalt thou eat of it.

P. Rich. Sweet cook!

Q. Elin. Ha, ha!

P. Hen. S'death, I will waste no further threats—
No comets of my passion—but thou'lt know
Destruction and remember how they flared.
I'll to De Born.

P. Rich. And I to Aquitaine.

P. Hen. [*shaking his fist*]. My sign of parting.
P. Rich. Mine.
Q. Elin. Now here's a cheek
For each—and kiss me both together—so,
My mouth is herald 'tween the lips arrayed
In double line of battle on each side.
Farewell—Farewell! Thank God you have repaid
My flesh and blood in you with usury.
P. Hen. I'll force his homage.
P. Rich. I'll bring down his pride
Q. Elin. They feed my heart! [*Exeunt severally.*

[*Enter Beatrix.*]

Beatrix. Your majesty.
Q. Elin. Oh pray
For motherhood; it is the golden thread
On which are strung the ages——
Beat. Gracious Queen!
Q. Elin. Time works within our wombs as in the depths
Of earth the miner. There are found the gems
He wears before the light, and there the dross
That makes the dull pile of oblivion.—
Well?
Beat. I am bidden ask your instant leave
To hear De Lacy speak——
Q. Elin. You velvet moth,
Of you? I will not listen to his suit.
He only lures with flame to drown in oil
Of dull neglect. Man's lamp of love is set

Ever to such low issues.

Beat. Not of me—
Of matter fitting but your private ear
He chafes to speak. My dearest sovereign, you
Should hold so stout a liegeman in regard,
Your service is his very stuff of life,
The yarn of all his time. He would be nothing
Without your favour. The King loves him not.

Q. Elin. Oh, the King loves none.

Beat. I fear he's deep in love.

Q. Elin. The King in love! It was my hope that morn—
You rode the spotted palfrey—I the grey—
My bridegroom with the bright half-rubied hair—
Woman, you must remember how we saw,
Our lover on the knoll, above the bend
O' the road, ere he was 'ware of us. Ah me!
You bring me news my Henry is in love?
His youngest lad
Is in his teens—in love?

Beat. Then shall I call
Sir Wilfred?

Q. Elin. Call him? Ay; he has a throat
That's loud, and shame must have a trumpeter,
Or never march at all.

[*Exit Beatrix.*

[*Re-enter Beatrix with Wilfred.*]

[*To Wilfred.*] The King's in love—
With you or me?

Wil. Nay, 'tis a snooded girl
Down i' the country, coloured like a rose.
I burn as hell to speak it—how they kissed
And hung together——
Beat. Mercy!
Wil. In a wood—
He pressed her to his heart with panting voice
That out-ran language.
Beat. And the little wretch?
Wil. Was eager as a devil.
Beat. Fie, I'm sick
Of horror and disgust.
Q. Elin. Thank God for boys!
To have reared a treasonous brood from his own blood,
To have it at my call! John laughs in 's face;
'Tis a fierce pup
My first; he'll fasten where I bid, relax
When Death or I cry Loose; Oh, I am glad
To have the record of those ancient moods
Writ clear
In my boys' faces. That first ecstasy
Of anger, then the weak drift of despair
In puling Godfrey. From a fire of tears
Leapt out my Lion-heart!
When I again conceived, my flesh was cold,
I bred a coward!
[*To Wilfred.*] Come, a covenant;
Join hands! . . . My Beatrix,
I toss her, a bright posy from my breast,

The day, the very hour, I've smoothed *her* limbs.
This . . . Let me loose on her! . . .
Speak fast! Direct me! I have sown i' my sons
The whirlwind of my nature; he will reap.
This doe of the forest—my peculiar prey—
With silver-arrow'd death she must be pierced;
The wrongèd Dian must behold her bleed!
I have not shared the King's love o' the chase;
It 'gins to stir in me.

[*Enter Henry.*]

My lord, these twain
Have kept me all the morning with their loves.
Will you not bless them?

K. Hen. Love alone can bless:
Not kings.—Sir knight,
Be merry. Of twain studies one must be
For ease, one for attainment. You'll pass days
Too strenuous at task with life and love.
Love therefore as a pastime,—this fair dame
Your mistress of the revels. Joy to each!

[*Exeunt Beatrix and Wilfred.*

Q. Elin. A pastime! From experience you speak?

K. Hen. I never have concerned myself with love.
Where's John?

Q. Elin. Why, with his retinue of fools.
Best set an ape
Before base things, since whatso'er he sees
Must fall a prey
To the antics of his visage. Do you need

One to make mock of majesty?

K. Hen. The boy,
Where is he? Tell me where. O Elinor,
Consider: you have Henry, the young king,
To dote on; grant this favour to mine age,
Let be our youngest boy—leave the soft wax
Of's heart unimpressed by your virulence.
He calls me "father,"—I who bear an old
Usurper's aspect to your fiery three,
Plant not your poison in him.

Q. Elin. With my milk
He sucked it. The soft-browed deceptive lad
You munch with kissing dogs his brothers' heels
And licks allegiance to them. You're disgraced
Suing for love as humbly on your knees
As once for pardon at your Becket's tomb.
A piteous whine!—"Love me, my little son,
Or heart will burst"—a sorry spectacle!
I have a king to dote on—a *young king!*
I tell you to your face, that boy of ours
Crowned Henry has my love, because he has
My bridegroom's eyes;—but for the rest, my lord,
You're old to think of love: when you were young
You thought not of it.

K. Hen. I embraced your lands,
Not you.

Q. Elin. Plantagenet, you wronged yourself
As you had made the day and night your foe,
And roused

The violated seasons to confer
Each his peculiar catastrophe
Of death or pestilence—*Embraced my lands!*
I'll shatter you
As Nature shatters—you, as impotent
As the uprooted tree to lash the earth
That flings its griping roots out to the air.
And plants it burgeoned summits in the soil.
Embraced my lands!—Ah, I forget myself—
The loveless are insensate to presage;—
'Tis in calamity's harsh stubble-field,
They learn to suffer. I'll be harvester,
And sickle your ripe joys. *Embraced my lands!*
Had you embraced me, I had borne you fruit
Of soft-fleshed children. Hug the progeny
Of your stony lust, and curse me! [*Exit.*

K. Hen. She forgets—
When she is gone,—dear bliss!—the thought of her
Lies not a stinking corpse about my heart.
The loved or loathed may haunt us. Who *oppress*,
Are mortal in remembrance: being past
As sultry day that kept the air in bond,
I can breathe free. How beautiful
To have the mind a solitude for love!
Mine's clamorous as a camp—one silken tent
Close-curtained, secret . . . Rosamond!

[*Enter Courtier.*

Cour. A man
Would see you, sire,— a haggard, bright-eyed knave,

With rapid tongue.

K. Hen. I know him. Bring him in.

[*Exit Courtier.*

The architect [*Re-enter Courtier with Mavis.*

We would be private. Go. [*Exit Courtier.*

Mavis. 'Tis done, and this the eve of the fifth day. All ready.

K. Hen. Come within. Yon door hath ears
Of human shape. Be dumb! This very night
I'll ride with Topaz to the Oxford woods.
Come, follow! thou dost pant; I'll give thee wine.

[*Exeunt within.*

SCENE IV.—*Woodstock. Moonlight. Rosamund asleep under a beech-tree. Enter on the other side Michael.*

Mich. Ay, 'tis a fair night—as much day as can be, only a bit dark i' the corners like. 'Tis warm, too, for a night o' May—wonderful soft and dry.—Now what is the dog a-snuffing at? Here, Blanche, here! We must stop for no game. . . . 'Tis late belike, an' the wenches are a-bed.

[*Enter King Henry behind the bushes.*]

K. Hen. Is't a hobgoblin, this black, crooked shape?
The dog that snuffs about yon single drift
Of snowy womanhood, a thing bewitched?
I will protect her from all enmities.
Stand!

Mich. Robbers, robbers, robbers! I'm trapped;
I've naught!—God help! [*Exit in flight.*

K. Hen. 'Tis only some belated peasant. There!
He's gone.—She sleeps as innocence, and I
Her lion-shield. So young—so still! O Sleep,
Thou lover pressing closer while we live,
Than any other bedfellow on earth,
I'm jealous of thy hold on her dear limbs,
Thy intimate warm clasp. Ah, but she dreams!
Divine to watch
The course of her dreams, and by the rising flush
Mark the king's entrance. Soon as she awakes
I'll worship her!—in worship's fiery clime
Desire 's a child audacious, innocent,
And knows not it is naked. Sweet, so close,
And I can let thee fondle with my shade!
One kiss, the trembling whisper of a touch,
And we're together! [*Kisses her.*

Ros. Prison! No,—there's air!
O Henry!

K. Hen. Love!

Ros. You left me desolate,
And in a prison. Still mine eyes are wet
With their leave-taking tears.

K. Hen. What, weep to-night,
Your birthday? Rose, you are a woman now;
You love the king—how much?

Ros. The stars must count.

K. Hen. You'd do me homage, Rose,

Were you the lady of broad lands; what vows
Shall I require of you who hold in fief
My heart's wide realm?
Ros. I give you of myself
All, all there is—and for the rest, my love.
K. Hen. And you will swear me over-lord of all
The womanhood
That Time's good sword shall win for you?
Ros. Ay, all.
How should I know
That I am girl, or, if you'll have it so,
With this May-moon rise woman, save for love?
K. Hen. The moon [*wrapping her in his cloak*]
For touching this white shoulder must be banned!
Let's to the deeper woods! The nightingale!
Dost hear that urgent note?—a thorny sigh,
A prick sets bliss to bleed, desire too sharp
For tolerance—a pang.
Ros. I'm curious
To learn what happens to the nightingales
At daybreak. Henry, do their gurgling throats
Stop like a torrent when it turns to rest
Under green leaves?
K. Hen. In the nest all grows still.
I've built a fair bower-nest for thee, my bird,
And there we'll mate.
Come, 'tis a little deeper in the wood,
And nearer to its heart.
Ros. I love you here

Where the beech is and the sun. I will not go
Where I have never loved you.
K. Hen. Ha! Not come?
Who is it orders? God, with those clasped hands
She's forging mail to keep me from her heart.
You love me in the woods!—a summer love!
You shall love me in the winter, in the world,
Where'er I will; what pain I put you to.
You shall not choose. Is this your loyalty?
And you'll not go
Where you have never loved me! In the camp,
The palace, I can find no spot of life
Where I have "never loved." Where'er I am
Is Love—the famished child you will not feed.
Come, come! Ah, Rose, you cannot know the pain!
. . . If you'll not come,
I'll burn the bower, ride off to the wars,
Make havoc till I perish.
Ros. It fulfils
My dream.—You shut me in a prison close—
* * * * * * *
Henry, I cannot leave you; lead me home. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*Another part of the Wood. Moonlight. Enter Margery.*

Mar. O moon, I love to be afraid, an' see
The elder-boughs all white, an' feel alone

With my big fear of every bush. The fays
Will dance to-night, for all is blue and still;
There's not a little wind runs from its hole
To be a mouse among the trees.—Good Lord!
There's the black yew I never pass, because
I know 'tis dreadful underneath—I'll run!
Yes, there's the stone! Yes, yes—an' there are they
The honey-elves!

[*Lies, and watches the fairies dance and sing.*

Fairies. In the moony brake
When we laugh and wake,
And our dance begins,
Violets hang their chins
Fast asleep—
While we laugh and leap.

Mar. The little wingy circle spins about
So that I cannot see 'em in the gloom;
They might be made o' spider's gossamer.

Fairies. Woodbine-leaves above,
Each a tiny dove,
Roost upon the bare
Winter stems, and there
Peaceful cling—
While we shout and sing.

Mar. They've jumped the bonfire glow-worm. Here they come!
Soft! They will dance upon my hair as moss,
And I'll not scratch my head for all their toes.

Fairies. On the rooty earth
Ferns of April's birth,
Brown and closely furled,
Doze like squirrels curled
Warm and still—
While we frisk our fill.

Mar. Now I can see their scrimpèd kirtles green,
And swinging beads of dew about their necks;
They've not the pretty caps o' Midsummer,
Poor midges,—only cowslip-bells, o'er young,
That fall at every jerk, an' dirty cups
From acorns of last year.
I'll make my tiny peakèd bonnets red,
And see if they will pick 'em from the twigs.

Fairies. Hark! our ears have caught
Sound of breath and snort
Near our beechen-tree,
Mixing carelessly!
Sprites away!
Fly as if 'twere day! [*Exeunt.*

Mar. They're gone! I heard a noise! Oh, oh, oh, oh!
If it should come from underneath the yew! [*Faints.*

[*Enter Wilfred, leading his horse.*]

Wil. By Cupid! 'tis my nut-brown maid enacts
The shrieking owl! I swore I'd find her here,
Watching for silly spirits of the night,
That never come at all. My simpleton,
My comely rustic fool, to be cajoled,
The pleasant way of forcing childishness.

Words be my only violence to win
A lusty little paramour. These churls
Are hoodwinked by the language of the great.
Each finger is an icicle to touch.
I'll wrap her in my cloak, fold her in fur,
Before I speak. She's a delicious heap.
My cosset!

Mar. [*starting*]. Rosie!—Why, I'm not in bed!
[*Discovering Wilfred*] Oh, Oh! [*sobs*]

Wil. My pretty maid, you're in my arms,
And I'm the knight to whom you told a tale
Of elfin pranks beneath the elder-trees,
Just on the strike of midnight. So I came
To see among the fairies which is fairest,
That I may give her gems and gold and love.
I see her!

Mar. Sir, . . . I think they skipt away . . .
A moment back.

Wil. But one was left behind.

Mar. You only see some primroses.

Wil. [*aside*]. 'Tis thus
We win the city harlots; but to-night
I'm ineffectual.—[*Aloud*] 'Tis melancholy
Watching for pixies dressed in flow'ry bits—
Not much to see, if seen; while in the town
Are ladies trooping all in bodices
Of scarlet, jewel-lighted, with their locks
Caught in a golden web; and there they dance
With knights unarmed and rustling in silk.

Mar. It must be brave to be in town !
Wil. This dress
Is poor—it wants an edge of gold ; the stuff
Is coarsely woven. If you'd come to town,
And let me love you, robes of red and white,
With golden fleur-de-lis all over them,
I'd give you, and a necklace of bright gold.
Mar. It must be brave in town !
Wil. Oh, but it is !
Mar. I'd like to see it very much.
Wil. And have
A pretty dress of red ?
Mar. I've got a cloak
At home. And this is my old dress.
Wil. Poor wench !
You'd like to have a necklace of bright gold ?
Mar. Yes, sir ; I've only got a string of eggs.
Wil. Kiss me ?
Mar. They've told me to be coy with men.
Wil. With foresters and peasants, not with knights ;
You should do all a gentleman could ask.
Mar. I'd rather not.
Wil. Come, come !
You have not learnt respect, and if you'd have
A silken bodice, I must have a kiss.
Mar. Silk !
Wil. And with spangles on 't.—My bait has ta'en ;
The body 's caught in raiment as a net.—
Kiss me ?

Mar. I've never kissed a man before.

Wil. Then try how nice it is. [*Kisses her.*

Mar. I'd best go home.

Wil. Nay, but the scarlet and the linen fine,
The broidery of wedded gems and gold,
The silken vest? Will you forget them all?

Mar. I can't.

Wil. Then will you come to town with me?

Mar. Ye—s.

Wil. Or I'll go, and you be left to wear
Coarse clothing all your life, and have no play
But watching leaves or pixies at their dance.

Mar. I'll run home and put on my better frock.

Wil. No; for we'll have you straightway dressed in white
A-glow with lilies.

Mar. Lilies o' the vale?

Wil. Oh, something larger. There, another kiss.
One, two—she cannot count them, so I'll take
An unrestricted measure.—Come this way. [*Exeunt.*

[*Re-enter Fairies.*]

Fairies. Silence! on the ground
Set the toadstools round.
Of these mortals twain
We to talk will deign,
Grave and wise,
Till the morning rise.

SCENE VI.—*Without the Labyrinth. Morning. Enter King Henry and Rosamund.*

K. Hen. Sweet Love,
Here we must part. [*Taking her hands.*
Oh, brave, unwedded hands, that wear the kiss
Of troth-plight for their pledge—a pretty bond!
You have the royal seal of a king's lips
At your free service ever.
Ros. I am glad
No woman ever spoke to me of love.
It's pure
Only from burning lips.
K. Hen. [*aside*]. Her innocence
Kept the flame golden! [*Aloud*] I have taught you well?
My bonnie wood-bird, when I'm at the wars,
I'll lie in my tent and think of the sweet throat
Of the nightingale that swells for me.
[*Kissing her throat.*] Again
You turn? Home, sweeting, this is forwardness
To stroke my curls and fondle me.
We've done with parting, if you glisten so,
Unpacking all your sweets before the eyes
That must to fast.
Ros. O Henry, could I lie
In the green sunshine and sing soft all day
The words o' the lute!

The little wood-sorrel and strawberry leaves,
I've smiled to see them twinkling with my tears,
When I have cried for sound of horse's feet,
And the woodpecker provoked me.
K. Hen. What surprise
To find my lady in her midmost bower,
Loosing from silken fillet, knot by knot,
That hair that measures, as I well believe,
My royal stature! When you comb it out,
As the rower from the sea strikes sudden light
With his oar's motion, every crispèd tress
Will shimmer into argent. I shall laugh
To find you silver-haired. Now to my will.
You've wedded a Plantagenet. Seven nights
Keep watch in heaven. When your couch is touched
With the first moonbeam, take it as a sign
That night
You lie not lonely.
Ros. While I live alone
Let me be free to gossip with the woods.
K. Hen. My lady keeps her bower.
Ros. What should you fear?
K. Hen. Your father will be seeking you.
Ros. My lord,
You would not banish me from sight of him,
My fond old foster-father? He'll ne'er know
I slip away from him. I still must tend
His gentle childishness, and to my state
When the King rides his forests.

K. Hen. Were it my dearest hound that thus let creep
A minute 'twixt my word and bidding done——
Ros. I cannot leave my father. He'll not eat
If I dress not his food, and Margery
So wild and negligent. . . .
K. Hen. I'll order good Sir Topaz to procure
[*Enter Margery.*
All comforts for old Michael; trust me, Rose.
Sweetheart, once more farewell. [*Exit King.*
Ros. There's Margery;
She'll tell me of my father. What! her cheeks
Are peonies; she looks . . . Where have you been?
Who tricked you in these gauds?
Mar. [*dancing*]. A knight! all gold
To his horse's knees. It's splendid! You're in white.
How beautiful! But, sister, I've a man
Gave me these pearls, and called 'em mistletoe—
A kiss for every one. He's taking me
To London on a palfrey. [*Stopping before Rosamund.*
Rosamund,
Though I'm a child, he's making love to me;
It's like you and the King.
Ros. The King! O God!
You've been asleep all night, at home?
Mar. No, no—
With Sir Wilfred, and he promised me
A frock all blue, with stars, and made me laugh.
He'll after me; the palfrey had a stone

In 's foot, and while he pulled it out I peered,
And something glistened—then I jumped down quick
And saw . . . don't shudder. Rosie, do you live
Inside? Why, it's a palace. He'll come soon.
Just see, this scarf
Is gayer than the kingcups.
Ros. [*aside*]. A mere child
Playing with fairies!
Mar. Past the cherry-trees
We rode: the moon was like a candle held
To the little slit of light down in our room!
Rosie, I cried to kiss you once, and he—
[*Enter Sir Wilfred.*
He's coming—held me firm, blew down my ear,
"You think none naughty but yourself, you elf!
Your sister can play pranks. She sleeps to-night
In a palace with the King." Oh, but it's fine!
Ros. [*aside*]. How can I save her? [*Aloud.*] Child, leave gambolling,
They want to steal and kill you. Take my hand,
[*Catching her hand and turning to the labyrinth.*
Come, see the pretty palace.
Sir Wil. [*advancing*]. Pardon me,
That lady is *my* prize, if you're the king's.
Your little foster-sister has an eye
Of an enchanting wildness. In attire
Becoming that brave skin. . . .
Ros. [*gathering Margery in her arms*]. Sweet Margery!
Oh, do not look at him. Love, hide your eyes

In my bosom; hush! [*To Wilfred.*
You shall not touch the child.
The King—his name shall shield her.
Sir Wil. Ay,
You bear it proudly. You're his mistress—so!
Queen Elinor shall hear of this.
Mar. [*looking up*]. Rose, Rose!
Do you not want me go and see the streets,
And wear grand jewels? I will stay with you.
Don't sob so 'gainst my heart.
Ros. I ll keep the child. [*To Margery.*
Sister is lonely; stay with her.
Sir Wil. [*to Margery*]. You little fool, d'you hear?
I'll fetch the Queen.
She'll frighten you.
And when she sees your sister here, who keeps
The King away, she'll take her by the hair,
And bind it round her till it chokes.
Mar. No, no!
She shall not come.
Ros. You have betrayed the child.
God curse you for 't.
Mar. Have I done wrong, dear Rose?
Sir Wil. [*to Rosamund*]. Fair precedent
You've given my audacity. The thing
You call her *ruin* had been *triumph* if
The actress were yourself; no more to her
Than rick of a trash goblin. [*To Margery.*] Margery,
You must with me; and if you're very good,

I'll not blab of your sister. If you stay,
I'll fetch the Queen
To murder her by inches.
Mar. [*struggling from Rosamund*]. Murder Rose!
I'll strike her in the face. [*To Rosamund.*] He is my man,
And I *must* follow him! Rose, you'll be safe,
He'll not offend me. [*Kisses her.*
Ros. [*clasping her, and kneeling to Sir Wilfred*]. For our Lady's sake,
Leave this wild innocence to me.—
I've sinned.
She's torn
Her frock in the briers, and laughs.
Mar. [*struggling*]. I'll not with you,
With my man! [*Jumping into Wilfred's saddle.*
Good-bye. [*Exeunt Sir Wilfred and Margery waving her hands.*
Ros. And I am bound to him,
The King and my seducer! Oh, he loves,—
It is not so he loves me!—
Margery,
He's hard and cruel; Margery, come back!

* * * * * * *

Nothing to see
But a trout leap in the stream. [*Turns to the labyrinth.*
[*Enter Sir Topaz.*]

Top. Mercy! if there are not folk about, and my lady outside the walls. Bless the pretty soul, she looks badly. There's been a summer shower on the two roses

of her face. My dear damozel, I must lead you back 'Tis a strict command I have that you never stray from the door. There's a little garden within, where is broom and what not. Nay, look not so down-hearted. I've planted sunflower and sweet basil against the season.

Ros. I'm so bewildered. Where in all this green Starts the way home?

Top. Straight to the door, straight to the door—that is your home. Permit [*takes her arm*].

Ros. And will you never let me out again?

Top. Nay, nay; you'll be very happy. And my dear monarch is so full of griefs, I'd rather lose a seat in heaven than put you in peril.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Winchester. A terrace. Enter Queen Elinor, Wilfred, Jose, and Beatrix.*

Q. Elin. When, when?
Wil. Not yet have Time and Circumstance
Engendered their love-child Occasion.
Have patience, O my Queen!
Q. Elin. *Patience* and *Queen!*
Thou fool, the words are mortal enemies,
As much opposed as Strength and Impotence,
Entreaty and Command. I am no queen
Then, when I must be patient; royalty
Allows no pause between the will and deed.
Wil. Pardon!
Beat. Yet God is patient.
Q. Elin. What, my saint?
Patient! God patient! Does He ever pause?
Give me a poison-bowl to mix, a blade
To try the edge of—something to prepare.
Jose. There's for your silver pious tongue!
Beat. We're told
God's patient with our wickedness.
Q. Elin. What! lags

In preparation?—puts away His wrath?
Takes ease, as you would bid me now? You fools!
He whets the hunger ere the sin be hatched
Of the dragon that will tear it in our sight.
He never waits!

Jose [*to Beat.*]. Why were you not a nun?

Wil. Because she's tender, and her shining self
She'd never make foul weather of in black.

Jose. Ha! ha!

Beat. For shame!

Wil. Nay, Mistress Beatrix,
What were my loss!

Beat. Then, sir, I'll take the veil.—

Wil. Of bridal lawn—ay, ay!

Beat. You have me, sir,
But you must learn to keep a sinless mouth;
I'd have my husband irreproachable.

Q. Elin. [*aside*]. To think of it!—at Woodstock!—
and a home!
He brought *me* to a place inherited;
For her he's built this palace.—Rosamund?

Wil. The name?
You have it right.

Q. Elin. And planned the building.—Walk!
Why should we stand? In pausing we grow cold.
[*They pace apart.*

[*Enter King Henry*].

K. Hen. Sons, sons! She'll dash the words against
her mouth,

As if to break 't to pieces. And she stirs
A troop of boys, with tricks of horsemanship
And set o' the lips that stamp her nuptial faith,
To mad rebellion. Would she murder them?
She is a desperate woman! Sick at heart
Of all her wrath, passing yon twines of rose,
My wont, I tore a handful of the flowers,
Black, splendid, half malignant as it seemed,
To throw into her lap,—a gift for queens—
My first to her, coiled sleeping on her couch.
When presently she woke, she took the flowers
And sobbed, "A happy dream!—the sweet warm scent!—
For the king kissed me close, and called me Rose;"
Then tossed them from her with a stormy hand.
I heard her singing her Provençal songs
For an hour afterwards. Can she suspect?
I dare not try to soften her. She smiles
At a deprecating word—as the sword smiles
In blades of finest temper. I must keep
My majesty.—What news? [*Enter Messenger.*

Mess. A letter, sire,
From the third prince, your son.

K. Hen. Ah! give it me. [*Reads.*
Death-warrant to my heart!—
A call to Aquitaine. O Rosamund!
I'll bear the news myself. He asks my help.
[*To Mess.*] Hence, and be entertained.
[*Advances to Elinor.*] What! rebel too,

My tongue!—Read this.

Q. Elin. News from the children?

K. Hen. Ay

Your progeny, in arms, war each with each,
In most unnatural combat. Our chief son
Presses back Richard to the ocean's point,
Who prays for help we'll grant him speedily
Whom favour you?

Q. Elin. Who bears thy name and face
Is my prime warrior.

K. Hen. You'd greet me, how,
If I returned a conqueror?

Q. Elin. With shrieks,
A spectre's welcome.

K. Hen. What, that 's darkly said.
I'll never slay the first-born of my loins
For all his bitter disobedience.
I trust you with the guidance of my realm:
Be ready for all chance; leave not the gates
Of Winchester. My Queen, the man in you
Will keep my honour safe, while I chastise
Our rebel offspring. You, good gentlemen,
Keep revel as our land were not distraught.
I may not tarry longer. Elinor,
Pray, not as wife or mother; pray for peace
To our divided hearts. Farewell! [*Exit.*

Wil. 'Tis come!
The moment's ripe——

Q. Elin. For vengeance and the deed!

Wil. [*to Beat.*]. My fair, you shudder at the thought
of blood.
We've work to do. Braid me that favour, sweet;
You promised, and I crave.
Beat. Nay, I'll to church. [*Exit.*
Wil. And there we'll meet.—I only know one way
To get the door unlocked.
Q. Elin. None but ourself
Must murder her. Oh, I am blind with hate!
You'll lead me by the hand? I could not catch
The thread o' the maze.
Wil. I say there is a way.
Her foster-sister lives within my house,
A common wench—but thus she'll serve our turn.
She shall be taken to her father's hut—
(He'll have her back; they're grossly lenient,
These peasants, in such matters)—which is near
To Woodstock and the sylvan labyrinth.
There shall she seek her sister, there grow dear
To jovial Topaz in his lonely hours.
And thus her voice will be our key; to us
He'll double bar the door.
[*To Jose*]. She does not mark.
[*To Elin.*]. Listen, at Woodstock I prepare the toils.
[*To Jose*]. Attend the Queen, till at a sign from me
You draw her to the precincts of the maze.
Give her a gipsy's dress, and thus equipped
Yourself, await the doing of the deed,
With ready horses, just outside the wood.

I will attend her at the beldam's cot
Down by the brook—you know it—to the right;
There shall the poison brew.
Jose. And how long hence?
Wil. I fear me some few weeks, or even more,
To make all straight. But stay you till I send.
The king belike will not return for months.
Jose. I'll off to help you.
Wil. Look! she's throttling her.
Jose. Ah, truly! Speak and soothe. [*Exit.*
Wil. Dear Queen, adieu.
Have patience; you must feign a sickness.
Q. Elin. Yes!
Something at last *to do.*
Wil. I'll straight prepare
My piece of goods for travel. [*Exit.*
Q. Elin. If he die
In France, two lovers will be gay in heaven,
And I on earth in hell. He must not die;
I must watch work in him the injury.
When God would hurt, He turns the heart adrift
To cut itself alive among the tombs,
And sets not corpse to corpse;—he must not die!

SCENE II.—*Winchester: outside a chapel; Margery sitting on a tombstone.*

Mar. He called me harlot—would not stay at home,
But left the house just as the wretched moon
Fainted away, and everything was wet.
[*Enter Wilfred and Beatrix.*]
'Tis he!
I'll go to—no, I cannot; oh, good saints,
I cannot! Who's that he's a-talking to?
She's better dressed than me, an' white o' skin.
Oh me!

Wil. [*to Beat.*]. Why go to church so oft?

Beat. Because, Sir Wilfred, 'tis the dormitory
Of souls that find their pillow on sweet prayer.
The want is frequent.

Wil. Marry! while you kneel,
Love has to play the monk.

Beat. Sir Wilfred, fie!
I fear you're not religious.

Wil. I'm in love!

Beat. And love is half religion.

Wil. Lovely saint!

Beat. Oh fie, Sir Wilfred!

Wil. Lovely angel!

Beat. Peace

Wil. 'S death! then lovely woman!

Beat. Nay, for shame,
You're full of oaths.
Wil. Just stop them with a kiss.
Beat. Nay, not in public, by my modesty;
A girl is watching us!
Wil. Oh—ah! the slut!
Our marriage day will never come methinks.
Beat. It is Time's sluggard, as all glad days are
That slowly from the curtained future rise,
Unwilling to forsake the bed which Hope
Has made with golden hands.
Wil. I'm for the bed
Dressed by a grosser chamber-maid.

[*Exeunt.*

Mar. Alone! alone! I never felt alone
I' the country; there was something loving me
In all the green and everywhere about;
But here I'm lonely—lonely—desolate.
There is no love for me in all the men,
Nor in the streets they make. I cannot cry
Because of loneliness, because——

[*Enter Jose.*]

Jose. Ho, wench!
You want another woer. Look at me!
What say you, Mopsy?
Mar. Go away.
Jose. Not yet.
Why, hem! you're resting on a slab that boasts
The unexampled virtue of its dame;

She'll break it open with her finger-point,
And mark you for perdition.

Mar. Oh, good sir,
I cannot read [*rising*].

Jose. Nay, never spoil the joke;
Let's see your purse; your finery is dashed.

Mar. No, no!

Jose. Come, goose-cap, out with it.

Mar. [*beginning to cry*]. 'Tis here—keep it. The fairies . . . I . . . [*In bringing the purse out a bit of red stuff appears.*

Jose. Well, and what of them?

Mar. The little cap . . . I began it . . . this this . . . O' my old red skirt . . . I . . . an' the little bodies . . . why, why . . . they've harebells n—ow [*sobs on her knees*].

Jose. The dolt! Look here! 'tis gold, not silver, mind.
Some weighty pieces. Come!

Mar. I hate you!

Jose. Strong!

[*Re-enter Wilfred.*]

Wil. Margie, old girl! Ho! brother, get away! [*Aside.*] She's yours hereafter. Come to me anon.

Jose [*To Mar.*]. God bless you! [*Exit Jose.*

Wil. Jewel, I have merry news.
These cheeks are wan and dinted, ask for winds
That blow across the fields. My turtle-dove,
We'll to your home.

Mar. Is it to cast me off
Because you take . . . a wife?
Wil. Ha, jealousy!
Why, baggage, bless your innocence, we wed
Because we must. A wife, a wife! Forsooth!
We look more sweet on minions such as you,
Than on our proper spouses. Thus it is:
I ride perforce to Oxford, and you wait
The space of some few days till I return.
At Woodstock there's a jolly squire who keeps
Your foster-sister's bower. Margery,
Seek him. His honest talk will spend the time
hang heavy as a miser's purse.
We'll start at dawn.
Mar. You'll bring me back again?
It is so still down there.
Wil. Nay, never fear.
Brave wench, a kiss! And now come home with me.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.— *Winchester: An ante-room to the Queen's chamber. Curtain before the door. Enter maidens.*

1st Maid. Since Lammas-tide
Autumn hath lain about the doomèd woods.
To-night she storms them, battering the leaves
From many a stricken oak.
2nd Maid. And the wind waves
The curtain to and fro.

3rd Maid. Is death behind? I know not which to fear,
The ruffling night or the dead quietness
Within.
2nd Maid. I'd like to peep.
3rd Maid. Thou dar'st not; none
Enter save Beatrix.
2nd Maid. A cunning leech!
3rd Maid. Yet *she*
Is colourless, and whimpers, "Pray for us!" [*Thunder.*
2nd Maid. Hear you that?
Should the king be afloat?
1st Maid. Impossible!
His stoutest vessel cannot climb such waves,
As must make mountain-country of the sea
Betwixt his lands.
2nd Maid. 'Twas pity that the tales
From Holy Land should keep him in the town
After farewell.
3rd Maid. They say it fretted him.
2nd Maid. Peace, peace! The curtain moves.
[*Enter Beatrix.*]
All. How fares the Queen?
Beat. She cannot sleep. Is the King still detained?
1st Maid. He left five hours ago.
Beat. A fearful night!
I cannot calm the Queen. Fetch me Sir Jose,
He'll aid me; then to bed!
1st Maid. God lay the storm! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Woodstock: Forester's hut.*

[*Michael, laying faggots together for a fire.*]

Mich. There's no wenches. I can lay the faggots, and maybe stir a little flame. . . It's growing dark, . . . one might almost as well be underground; it's cold, and nothing to smile at. There's no wenches, and that means no broth. A dry crust's enough, without a child to break one's bread in the bowl and spice it. To think she could have done it—her—as white as the lily on the pond. But her mother was a slippery thing. Had she been as honest as fair, I had never had the hiding of her babe. And Sir Topaz must come with an air; how Blanche barked at him! "The Lady Rosamund was well; the king had taken her under his protection; had I a message for her?" Well, I told him to mark how the dogs yelped at him, and be gone. The wood's green; it won't kindle. . . . . .

Mags was the faggot-gatherer, what a wench!
They'd not 'tice her to mischief; she was shrewd;
She milked the goat, and never lolled about;
It's the lying on the grass that leads to sin,
Snapping at flies. I kept Mags at my side;
She knew the pups from their birth; she'd work to do
Feeding and training 'em. 'Twas a soft hand
Of Rose's, seemed to make you warm at once
The way she led you in. She didn't talk;
And it's a sign of honesty to talk.
That sighing when there's nothing wrong looks ill
Mag's eyes were wet two days for Blackberry;

Rose stroked my head—she didn't care for the cow;
She hadn't got the sense; but Margery—
A child to lean on that! just like yourself,
With a temper you'd grown used to—knew the rash
At sight, like measles, and could tackle it.
Mags, Mags, what have they done with ye, my wench?
The fire won't burn; I'll just lie down a bit.
No, no; I'll try again
To stir a flame. She may have lost her way,
And look for the red light about the door.
I'll try.

Mar. [*entering*]. Dear father!

Mich. [*hugging Margery*]. Hussy, clear the hearth!
Where have you been, you naughty girl? Oh, stop . . .
It takes my breath. . . . You wait
Till after supper, and I'll beat you blue
For straying in the woods. . . . Just tell me all.

Wil. [*advancing*]. I found your daughter, Michael, in the glade
Seven nights ago, as I was riding back
To town, in haste, on business of the King's.
I put her on my horse, and kept her safe
In charge of gentle ladies, till to-night,
When I restore her to you with the prayer
You will not let her play among the elves.
The woods are dense, her childish brain confused,
And harm may happen.

Mich. Thank you, sir.
[*To Margery.*] Mags, since you've been away

I've had no broth. Don't cry so; never mind!
Look in my face! You must have seen fine folks,
Fine ladies, in the city, were they kind?

Mar. So kind! . . . O Wilfred, will you go away?

Mich. You have not combed your hair—a ragged face!
How is it you don't ask for *her:* "Where's Rose?"

Mar. O father, Rosie's safe; she's with the King,
She'll be a lady; I may go sometimes
And see her.

Mich. This is not your woollen gown.

Wil. Kind ladies gave it her.

Mar. A lie, a lie!
No ladies gave it me, it was yourself.
Father, he promised me
Fine clothes to make me wicked. Why, there's Blanche.
Blanche, Blanche, you'll never know the difference.
She smells too at my frock. [*Jumping down and caressing the dog.*

Mich. [*to Wilfred*]. You took the hound
I had no mind to part with; you took her
And spoilt her for my use. I had two maids
At my fireside—good girls,
And when I dozed at nights and woke again
They seemed like angels watching me. Ah, Lord!
I shall dream now of fiends. If I could lay
My hands on her! Come here, now!

Mar. [*springing to him*]. Let me stay;
I dare not go with him. . . . A blow! . . . I thought

'Twas wicked men who loved you struck like that.
Speak to me.

Mich. Curse you. . . .

Wil. He has lost his wits.
Don't listen to him. Had you held your tongue,
All had gone well. Here, call your dog and come.

Mar. [*to Wilfred*]. No; I'll leave Blanche with father.
[*To Michael.*] Every day
I'll bring you faggots, lay them at the door.
I do not want to stay; it's spoiled at home.

* * * * * * *

How still my father looks. . . . Oh see, he sobs!
Let me go back to him. [*Struggling to escape from Sir Wilfred.*

Wilfred. He'll strike you dead.
There now, you'll see!

Mar. [*breaking from Wilfred*]. He's dead; he cannot strike.
The sweet grey hair!
Don't snuff so, Blanche. It's better to be dead;
It's safe, like the high shelf I used to climb,
Up out of reach. . . . How very thin
His hands are!

Wilfred. Poor Brownie! There, cheer up! Learn not to blab,
And you shall live with Rosamund. Come, now,
Kiss me; be good.

Mar. Take me to Rosamund [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*Within the Labyrinth Enter Rosamund and Sir Topaz.*

Ros. He'd not have died . . .

Top. I doubt it. I'm an old man myself. When death once claps you by the hand, you must go. Think not of that; think of the King! Belike he's coming through wind and rain.

Ros. Fie on me, fie! Is not my father dead? And Margery . . . and yet the thing I want . . . Is the wind fluttering through the trees? . . .

Top. 'Tis a wild night, but the wind cannot find you —so warm and close. Yet there's comfort; *one can!* The king will be here to-night. And I've taught you to play on the lute, and made you the lady you are—his very queen and idol!

Ros. He has a queen in Winchester.

Top. Now don't wring your hands till they're like the flowers o' bindweed at the droop o' the day. Sit, sit—and I'll tell you of Dame Elinor. She's a woman of black eye and blacker soul—that overflows in her births—her children benighted from all goodness. She's a snake about the poor king's heart, and they the brood of vipers that sting it within.

Ros. And he has never wronged her that she knows.

Top. Nay, nay, *never.* All the hurt is with him. Oh, Lady Rosamund! I've known him stout and red.

with face like a lamp and smiles that came out a'doors as if from home, and not from a dungeon. It's a woman's doing, the change. But you'll shake your tears off and comfort him. Keep your pretty face dry till he tells you of his broken heart. You may cry then. Why, I warrant he's here; I must to the bolts now. Hark!

[*Exit Topaz.*

Ros. Yes.—The door moves; I hear the wind—
Oh, I'm his leman, and I know not how
Bad women feel; I cannot act the part.
I am his Lady and his Love; it were
A mistress's part to meet him with reproach.
I'll be a rose for fragrance, not for thorn.
Alas! when we were lovers, I ne'er asked
What mood my love would like! He's coming! . . .

[*Enter King Henry.*]

K. Hen. Rose!

Ros. O sweet, my lord!
You're sick and weary. Keep the cloudy brow.
Let us be sad together; I've heard say
Green herbs are simple remedies, and so
There may be cure in Rosamund for ills
She wots not of. You're come to say *Farewell!*
I'll bear it, love.

K. Hen. God's truth, a Royal Rose!
Though my young vultures famish for my blood,
What matter! if my little Woodstock dove
Coo for her missing mate in widowhood
That tells where love lies bleeding.

Ros. Nay, not so.
I'll with you to the wars.
K. Hen. My doughty Love!
In the field's disposition, womanhood
Is best in the rear. The soldier must not see
In front the thing he loves; it would perplex;
Imagination of it nerves his hand.
You must not to the field—but day and night
You may besiege the skiey citadel;
I will appoint you captain in that war.
To arms, sweet lips, put off your peaceful use
Of softest kisses, and in prayerful mail
Equip you. But not yet. I'll keep this mouth
That flowers against my cheek for purposes
Most womanly. Shall women fast and pray?
Oh, never in Love's sight; it is contempt
Of his High Majesty. A fearfulness
Possesses me that here you are not safe.
I'll hide you deeper, you sweet-smelling Rose,
For safety with my treasures; you shall have
The custody of my imperilled crown.
Ros. Think not of me—but you, my dearest lord,
Give me your griefs to think of when you're gone;
They're dearer than your crown. You go to war . .
K. Hen. With my own blood; and Elinor——
Ros. I would not see
Dame Elinor . . . not look
On that which bore you rebels.
K. Hen. Ay, the boy

Who made me father would unmake me king.

Ros. May Heaven dishonour him!

K. Hen. A royal lad!
So princely! I have put the crown on 's head,
And smiled to see his brow confer a grace
On the gold bauble. Be he covetous
Of my grave, that territory shall be his;
He will annex it briefly.

Ros. Give me leave
To dress my father's grave. I've played the part
You feel the stabbing hurt of. . . .

K. Hen. When I'm dead
Haply the boy will grieve. Rose, have you lost
Your foster-father?

Ros. He died daughterless.
I hate your rebel son! Go, strike him dead.
There is a grave
Where I will put my hand in Memory's,
Listen her tales and bear the childishness
That doth so oft repeat.

K. Hen. I was mistaken babbling of my boy
As *you* had been his mother.

Ros. Rosamund
Could not have borne a traitor.

K. Hen. Ah, my sweet!
If you had borne him, Henry's very self—
The tiny portrait traced in flesh, with all
A woman's delicate imaginings,
Would have been dearer than the King, because

It was the King and Love and Rosamund.
Let us not wrangle : lovers wrangle thus,
Young lovers, who can kiss again next day.
We're parting ; one of us,
I think, will see the other once again.

Ros. God help me ! . . .

K. Hen. Oh, parting is the mirror in Death's hand,
Reflex of that immitigable face
Whose glance for ever sunders !

Ros. Dear, my lord,
There are some thoughts
That through this stormy weather of my sou
Cannot now travel toward you. Fare you well !

K. Hen. What ! Lightning in those eyes ! A long, long rain
Follows such storms ! Farewell ! [*Exeunt*

Scene VI.—*Without the Labyrinth.*

[*Enter Margery.*]

Mar. The country makes me shy—so shy ! The trees
O' the forest seem to stand aloof—straight up,
An' ask respect, like gentle folk in town.
An' then . . . the flowers, somehow, are not kind ;
They only look at me . . . the marigolds !
But they are in the gardens. . . . Yet I've stopped
At every wild flower, . . . an' they only look.
We were such cronies ! Oh, it frightens me !

This is the door; I'll very softly rap,
Lest she should hear. I would not for the world
Catch sight of her. . . . She would be haughty too.
[*Knocks.*

Top. [*within*]. Who's there? who's there? Master the Wind, ay?—that's put a glove on his noisy hand to make a fool of me? [*Looking through a window and then opening.*] Bless us!

Mar. Your honour——

Top. Indeed, good maiden, what would you?

Mar. A basket for the lady—whortleberries;
I gathered 'em this morning i' the dew;
An' if you'd give——

Top. Very pretty, very pretty! A fresh gift, but bad for the teeth, assuredly bad. Ho! ho! you've the sweet soot on your lips.

Mar. 'Tis from my fingers, for I like them not.
But Ro— I thought . . .

Top. A homely fruit! and you've set the sprigs about like nature. Well done! And pray where do you live, my pretty virgin, eh?

Mar. With Mother Greene.

Top. Odzookers! With Ellen Greene, the witch? a good girl like you! Why, she's got a black kitten that sucks her under the ear; and they say—mercy on us!—'tis a devil.

Mar. Oh, sir, but I have never seen it suck.
It sits upon her shoulders with large eyes
As yellow as the stars.

Top. 'Tis Lucifer.

Mar. She calls it Pretty.

Top. My child—tut, tut! Why do you live in her stye? Bless my heart! Her company's vile.

Mar. I have been left with her, and dare not go.
It's better i' the day.
But, oh! the dreaful night! I lie an' quake
To hear the purrs and chuckles i' the dark,
Or see the embers spring as green as wheat
About a hellish pot! the room grows big
And like a church at evening.

Top. Oh, carry trefoil and pray, *Ave Mary!* That's a safe prayer. Rove the woods and be merry. 'Tis lonely hereabouts; but never fear! Maids have a watch. Keep at large, and come at your will to me. I've a cup inside, and a bit of honest talk will keep you from further witchcraft. Little sorceress! you've learnt the art as long as it's white and holy. Oh, oh! You set that gay bonnet like a sweet pea—all flaps. Did Mother Greene teach the charm? Nay, I see! A scholar to your own lesson, and very right! Nature has a pretty way of teaching girls. Why, my lady—bless you! she puts a flower on her bosom as if to grow. Hist! that's her voice! Bring what the woods yield at your will. I'll give the berries to my lady. God be wi' you, lass! [*Exit.*

Mar. It's like old times.
He's natural, and does not seem to know,
As the flowers do, and all the men in town. [*Exit.*

SCENE VII.—*Woodstock: Witch's cottage. Enter Wilfred and Ellen Greene.*

Wil. It's getting late.
Greene. An' full o' bats an' owls.
Wil. Your time.
Greene. 'Tis true, but later of an eve
The fire is making yonder!
[*Goes apart.*
Wil. Margie's gone
To catch old Topaz in her artless net
Of prattle! 'Twas by very providence
I visited the silly chuck at last.
So many days and she had never moved
One step toward the fulfilment of my plan.
The hussy tires me with her drooping ways,
The little Autumn! She's dispiriting,
And makes me an old sinner with her sighs
And yellow tinct. If Jose can make her dance,
Twill be as the north wind, by savage play.
What tall, gaunt woman's that across the path!
A wolf, a prowling creature? Ah, the Queen!
She has no patience.
Q. Elin. Take me to the maze.
See here the fire-tipped blade!
Wil. Nay, you've mistook
The time; our thread is Margery's young voice;

E'en now she's making friends with the old man.
To-morrow night——
Greene [*advancing*]. Eh, are there two of us?
Pardie, there's magic in the hem of the robe.
Good faith! I tremble at her!
Wil. Goodie, here!
She needs a cup—the poison I bespoke—
Against to-morrow eve.
Greene. I've been to pluck
The berries. Lack-a-day! I only played
With wonders—for a poor soul must not die!
I frightened the young girls and got their pence.
Why, sir, that lass of yours, this blessed eve
She'll have a bath o' dew beneath the moon,
To comfort her.
Wil. Humph! devilish penitence!
Greene. But, Lord! I ne'er have sold me to the fiend;
Belike he's come to fetch me. Don't ye go.
It must be secret.—Kindly stay about,
Good sir.
Q. Elin. I cannot bide another night.
My brain grows hot; 'twill scorch my sense. The king
Returns a conqueror. She'll crown him—she!
Get access quickly. Ah, I fear my hand
Can scarce strike steady. Get the poison mixed;
My will is firm, and I can force her drink.
Sir Wilfred, there's a heart to stop, ere night;
The king is landing.

Wil. I'll seek Margery;
Watch you the draught a-brewing. I'll return. [*Exit.*

[*Q. Elin. flings herself on a bench.*

Greene. Beyond me—quite beyond me—a blue spirit
That's smelt at sulphur. My poor cat is grey.
Pretty! . . . There's sort o' chains about the air.
Lor! if I'm not afraid.

Q. Elin. To do my will?

Greene. What is it?

Q. Elin. To make death.

Greene. 'Twas once I sent
A faithless lover pining to his doom.
An' thus: I pinched a candle to his shape,—
So like, it made ye start; and by the fire
I kept it dropping.

Q. Elin. Fill your caldron—come!

Greene. I'm shredding vipers' flesh.

Q. Elin. I have a knife;
I'll help.

Greene. Is it a man you'd murder?

Q. Elin. No; a girl.

Greene. Bless us! D'ye see that flying thing with blood
I' the trail of it—a shroud! and at the breast——

Q. Elin. Old crazy brain . . . *her* ghost will comfort me.

Greene. Nay, to be haunted! Lady, look ye here!
There's safer ways.
I'll give ye this will make

Any one love ye, and be mad for ye;
Take that . . .
Q. Elin. You can?
Nay, nay, I must not be a fool;—
Past that! Henceforth on hatred I must feed.
To be hated more and more, and more to hate.
What's that in the pot?
Greene. It's henbane!
Q. Elin. Wherefore cook
Your wretched broth? This phial will suffice.
[*Snatching at phial.*
Greene. Not that, not that! It will not do the thing.
Q. Elin. All's ready! . . . Ah, it presses inwardly,
Like the full breast
Undrained by thirsty lips. I've borne the load
Of an unlonged-for heart; it stifles less
Than the burthen of dammed hate!
[*Re-enter Wilfred with Margery.*]
Mar. Who's this?
Q. Elin. I am——
Wil. Listen: this lady here
Is Rose's mother. She was lost, you know;
Now she is come again. She'll get you Rose
Out of the maze. She wants to see her so;
She can't be patient. Twenty years away!
Mar. Oh, she looks poor and hungry. I am glad
Sir Topaz said I might come any hour.
Wil. Then you shall be our guide, and with your voice

Call the good gentleman to let us in.

Q. Elin. Give me this Rose, I say!

Mar. I do not think
She's gentle; may be she will strike at Rose.

Wil. She's angry with the king, who shut her in.

Q. Elin. [*taking Margery firmly by the hand*]. Go straight; I am her mother.

Mar. Oh, I feel
As there were thunder in her; I'm afraid!

SCENE VIII.—*Labyrinth. Rosamund pacing the room. Clear moonlight.*

Ros. White moon, art thou the only visitant?
Thou look'st like death!
Dost glisten through the trees
My Henry bows his plumes to in the gloom?
He comes to-night; for good Sir Topaz said,
"My lady, put you on the crimson gown
The king had wrought for you, and ask no more,
But trust an old man's word.
And be you ready." It's a silver night;
I'll put me out apparel. How blood red
Burn the dark folds! I cannot put it on;
And yet I will. My lute; what is't I want—
God, or the King? [*Sings.*

Love doth never know
Why it is beloved,

And to ask were treason;
Let the wonder grow!
Were its hopes removed,
Were itself disproved
By cold reason,
In its happy season
Love would be beloved.
[*Laying down her lute.*

No; it hurts sharper. I must just sit down
On the edge of the bed, and comb my hair and wait—
It can't be long—until the tide of tears
Rises and fills
The cracked and parchèd channels of my heart.
I cannot think at all [*letting fall her hair*]. How beautiful
This gold made silver in the moonlight. What!
Would Heaven age me for my Love? Let's look
In the mirror. Rosamund, you're worshipful.
[*Starting back.*] 'Tis thus,
Even thus, he swore that he should come to me.
His very words! The prophecy's fulfilled,—
I'll comb my hair down to my very feet.
A step!—my heart, some patience. Henry, speak;
Bid it take courage! [*enter Elinor*] God, the Queen!

Q. Elin. The Queen, who'll give you access to your God;
The wife, who'll doom the leman. Elinor
Come to put bitter poison in the cup
The King drinks deep of. Never tremble so:

I'll do naught hastily. Give me your face
To lay between mine hands, and drink my fill
Of the rich beauty I must violate.
Let's look in your face ! Why, Death were yellow to
The blanch of your lips. Do not mistake me, girl,
I lay
Dagger and cup at leisure for your use ;
I will not harm you. [*Aside.*] What a curl o' the lash—
A lovely coast-line to the hidden realm
Of the eyes.—Have you thought of me these many days?
Queen, wife, and mother, and the thing you are.
Old age is heir
Apparent to the majesty of Death,
And thought of the impending royalty
Softens the manners, and should awe the heart
Of youth—that churl of nature !

Ros. I'll not stay
For any prayers ; only remove the siege
Of your eyes from off my soul. I will repay
The debt [*stabbing herself*]. This blood—
An earnest of the red gold from my heart—
Take it . . . and do for my dead flesh the things
A mother would entreat. [*Dies.*

Q. Elin. Sooth to my will, and she died prettily,
With tears on her cheek.

Mar. [*bursting in*]. Where's Rosamund ?

Q. Elin. A play at hide and seek here in the maze.
Warm !—at my feet.

Mar. You've killed my sister ; you're a murderess ;

And Sir Topaz murdered! Oh, he died so slow,
I could not leave him. Rose!
Wil. [*entering*]. My Queen, to horse!
I hear
The King's horn in the woods. The parchment's writ
We'd make him reader of. Plantagenet
Best spend his first wild fury on the dead.
Quick, by this passage.
Q. Elin. Would that I were here
To chronicle his face! Give me your hand!
This roof
Will break my brow. I've made my lord
A bridal bed—a royal recipe
For slighted wives. In very sooth the neigh
Of his horse! All's ready for him. [*Exit.*

Mar. [*kneeling by Rosamund's corpse*]. Oh, what is it that sucks the air from the room? An' I dare not go back, for the sweet old man breathed hard. It's worse than the dark, and it stares so. I never minded Rose looking. . . . They use coin. I've got some pieces of the silver left. I'll do it before I'm wild. But I shouldn't like the money there when I die. No. My hand. She's looking softer now. She hadn't seen the Prince Jesus before! 'Tis a great way above [*raising her head at the sound of footsteps*]. O Rose, Rose! Now I'll see what they do when we're dead who say fine things to us.

Wil. [*re-entering*]. You little fool!
Come out; did I not bid you follow? Leave

You here for witness, sooth! Gag up your mouth.
Come [*pausing before Rosamund*].
Oh, a royal morsel!
[*Margery stabs him.*
Mar. 'Twas the look
He gave
At Rosamund's white breast. I'm used to it.
He may look so at me! It trickles down—
The blood on his cheeks—and clots his curly hair,
The big black curls. I can't have hurt him much!
Wilfred! I love him, love him; be alive,
And strike and curse me. I've so swart a skin,
The yellow bruises hardly show; but he—
He's growing deadly white.
Wil. [*aside*]. A wench's thrust,
And mortal! Little drab!
She'll do what I tell her, though. [*Aloud.*] I'll have you hanged,
Do you hear, before the city? Men will hoot
And jeer at you; and say, "A slut like that,
To lay her hands upon a gentleman!"
The king will have you hanged tight by your neck,
Do you hear? till you are dead.
Mar. Hush, hush, hush, hush!
Don't bleed so fast,
Wilfred! Oh, kill me first, I can't be hanged;
Have you not strength to kill me?
Wil. Reach that bowl. [*She drinks.*
Don't stagger here to die; go further off!

Mar. Oh, kiss me! . . . Do not die! . . . It's horrible,
The cold inside.

Wil. She's fallen in a heap. [*Enter King.*
My brain's still sick
From loss of blood, or here's a spectre king!
How hoary pale!

[*The King enters staggering; stands silent before Rosamund's corpse.*]

King. Before the funeral the eyes are buried.
Thy lips—already is the tender mouth
A rosy marble to the memory
Of all past kisses. Lovely portraiture!
That young Desire beholding ages slow,
And turns from with the dull pace of regret.
Her lute—O God! there's life about the strings;
Her spirit's touched it. [*Looking round discovers Wilfred.*

Wil. [*to Margery, who groans*]. Peace!

King [*going to Wilfred*]. Confess your lips, and for your soul I'll pray
That God may damn it deeper every hour.
Unkennel!

Wil. Sire, that child,
Suspecting me of Elinor's base deed
(That's the Queen's scarf caught in your lady's dress),
Struck at me with the yet warm-blooded sword;
Now end.

Mar. Stop, stop!
This gentleman
Is kind to me, he never did me harm.

'Twas the tall lady with the knife . . . and this
[*lifting the poison bowl*].
Don't hang me, sir; if you'll wait a bit, I'll die.
I drunk it off
As he told me. Pretty, pretty Rosamund,
I'd like
To have seen her crowned. Give her a handsome tomb
In the church, and bury me
Out in the grass. I'm but a common girl,
And she's a lady. [*Dies.*

Wil. You've your paramour
To answer for; I mine. I killed that wench
For slashing at me!
Like enough
Your lady rent her body at command
Of majesty; what will not ladies do
For monarch's pleasure,—eh?

King. What lips God sets
To his chalice-cups of love! What drink
He gives foul mouths! Is there comparison
Betwixt our deeds? From this slain innocence
I wince not; for I worshipped. You—I swear
By the lost childhood of that cheek—*defiled.*

Wil. We had our pleasure the forbidden way,
Each after his own fashion. For the rest,
I bleed to death; it's painless.

King. You shall have
A leech, a cunning one. My men shall bear
Your body in a litter to your love,

With word from me how honourable your hurt;
And if she spurn you from her door, 'tis well;
Or if she tend you with cold eyes. [*Wilfred swoons.*] He swoons.
[*Turning to Rosamund.*] Heaven favours me, to give my Love
A private audience. They have pulled about
Our bower, sweet Rose; but there's a holy spot
At Goddeshill, where, 'mid the sisterhood
Of blessèd nuns, I'll rear a stately shrine. . . .
What need? . . . Death's labyrinth
None threads. Ah, Rosa Mundi! thou
That wert to the king a tender sweet-brier rose,
They've shed thy petals; all thy balmy leaves
Lie crushed against my heart. And what regret?
Without thee I had plunged for solitude
I' the murk of hell; and without me, my Life,
Thy spirit had ne'er worn love's purple robes.
Let's cover thee [*Wilfred stirs.*
From this base sight,—(My Sweet, how well thou know'st
'Tis the first time
Lust hath breathed near thee!) cover thee, until,
'Fore God and all His glistering righteousness,
I shall re-claim thee, body, ay, and soul.

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